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ABSTRACT

The history of the emergence and eventual success of the Mountain Towns' Teacher Center (MTTC) in South Central Vermont is embedded in the socio-historical development of the area and in the process of educational change. In the late 60's and early 70's the skiing industry created an influx of exurban populations which altered the patterns of stability and continuity in the communities of Wilmington, Dover, and Readsboro. The traditionally isolated public schools then suffered the additional disadvantage of frequent turnover among teachers and students. The idea of a teacher center grew out of a graduate course in education offered at Wilmington's Deerfield Valley Elementary School (DVES). The teacher center, based at DVES, has followed the developmental process outlined in the Rand study on educational change by Burman and McLaughlin--planning, initial program adjustment, expansion, and adaptation. The adaptation phase, involving the search for a new support structure, is ongoing at present. Although MTTC took an early lead in the rural teacher center movement, committment to innovation in rural education has been widespread and was actively fostered by the state department of education for years before MTTC came into being in 1974. (KO)

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THE RURAL TEACHER CENTER

A RESPONSE TO RURAL EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

John R. Watt

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Resource Development Foundation
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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Preface

The present study examines how a teacher center can bring new ideas and energy to rural education. Specifically it examines the relationship of the Mountain Towns' Teacher Center to the history and structure of educational and cultural change in South Central Vermont.

For assistance in developing and reviewing this study I am indebted to many people, in particular the following: David Bury and Susan Dyer managed and produced the study. Consultation and/or review of the preliminary draft were provided by Kathy Devaney, Lorraine Keeney, Gail McColl, Casey Murrow, Dorothy Schubert, Howard Shapiro, Nicki Steel, Marion Taylor and Anne Watt. During the interview phase of the project, many teachers, administrators and local citizens gave freely of their time and enabled me to fill in many details for which no documentation existed. I am glad to thank all those who helped in this way and to relieve them of any responsibility for mistakes of fact or emphasis which may remain in the text.

The study was funded through a grant from NIE and is a contribution to NIE's studies of organizational change in school systems. I do hope that it also contributes something to the local history of an endlessly fascinating state and culture.

West Dover, Vermont
February, 1979

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I. Introduction

Objectives of Study

Rural Teacher Centers are a new and unfamiliar development in American education. To date less than a dozen have been in existence throughout the United States for more than two years. Thus there has been little opportunity for the educational public to understand what a rural teacher center is and what real purposes it can serve. But professional interest in teacher centers is growing, and recent federal legislation has resulted in funding of several new centers serving rural areas.

The present paper undertakes an in-depth case study of the emergence of a rural teacher center and the institutional setting in which it came into being. The account concentrates on historical description, in order to permit interpretation from a variety of theoretical perspectives. The intention throughout is to develop a more complex model of rural education than is often found in literature on this subject. Because rural change tends to take a less visible and dramatic form than urban and therefore to be less susceptible to observation, the paper aims to clarify the nature of rural change through a study of organizational transitions in rural education. The significance of the teacher center in this respect is that it is an innovative institution designed to foster change, thus a study of a rural teacher center should help identify issues affecting change in rural education.

Among those issues two receive particular attention in this paper: first, the degree of flexibility and momentum for change within the institutional setting of rural education; second, the impact of the teacher center as a mechanism for promoting innovation. An underlying issue concerns the appropriateness of the teacher center as a response to rural educational need. To the extent that need is an index of readiness for change, how substantive a

need emerged in the educational setting described here and how effectively did the teacher center meet that need?

The Cultural Setting

One of the older and better known rural teacher centers is located just outside Wilmington, in south central Vermont. Given its traditional small scale farm and lumber economy and its thinly dispersed population, southern Vermont might seem an unlikely place for educational innovation. This is prime tourist country. Traditional New England villages, magnificent scenery and foliage, farmland, lakes and trout streams, have long made southern Vermont a resort area for urban vacationers, and this remains a significant aspect of its cultural identity.

But in the last thirty years skiing has created a whole new recreational industry which has transformed the economic and social structure of southern Vermont and converted it from a declining agrarian culture into a recreational hinterland for the dense east coast megapolis. In the wake of tourists have come second home owners and urban migrants looking for ways to combine work and recreation. To city dwellers seeking escape from urban problems Vermont with its fallow woodland, clean air and rural pace became in the 1960s "the beckoning country", linked to the city by new highways but protected by mountains, climate and dirt roads from mass infiltration. Attracted by these features, a whole new exurban populace has moved into southern Vermont in the last two decades and set up home alongside the indigeneous population.[1]

Thus if a De Tocqueville were to visit southern Vermont today, he would find two distinctive cultures living side by side. On the one hand would be the indigeneous families, closely related, many with roots going back two

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[1]The increasing attractiveness of traditional rural life for urban migrants is discussed in Moe, Edward O. and Tamblyn, Lewis R., Rural Schools as a Mechanism for Rural Development, ERIC/CRESS, July 1974, Chapter V.

hundred years, accustomed to modest resources, educated as generalists in the tradition of small self-reliant agrarian communities; on the other hand a broad mix of immigrants and transients from urban or suburban America (and elsewhere), seeking to set down roots or lead simpler lives, but accustomed to economic growth and to the specialization and mobility of modern urban life. Local history indicates that these two cultures have never been far apart; Vermonters have long been exposed to the lure of the city or of other more fertile agricultural regions. But today these cultures are intertwined, and this has affected every aspect of local community life.[2]

Impact on Schools

Few rural institutions have been more affected by this injection of external culture than the community schools. Traditional rural Vermont educated itself through the time-honored one-room "common" schools. These neighborhood institutions were vital to the organization of the township. They educated children through the equivalent of junior high in the basic literacy skills of reading, spelling, penmanship, and arithmetic. The school neighborhood districts also acted as subunits of township government. District school committees took care of roads, vital statistics and all aspects of school management and financing. Thus the neighborhood school districts reflected the demands of traditional rural life and played an intrinsic part in the development of the Vermont tradition of community self-government. In the 20th century, as education expanded and populations coalesced around commercial centers the neighborhood schools gave way to the inexorable process of school consolidation. By the 1950s, the last common schools had gone and unified schools, serving entire townships or groups of townships, and staffed

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[2]For a general statement, see Gehlen, Frieda L., The Political Aspects of Small Town and Rural Schools, ERIC/CRESS, May 1969, 21-22.

by professional educators, had taken their place.

Because of their comprehensive function unified schools became the focal agency linking the indigeneous and immigrant cultures. The schools were required to enroll all children irrespective of cultural background, to provide education that would satisfy parents with a wide range of expectations, and to deal with the considerable personal problems engendered by communities undergoing the stress of rapid cultural change. The traditional role of transmitting culture and basic literacy remained, but now the schools had also to mediate with an unstable and complex world and develop appropriate curriculum and services. Other community agencies such as churches, service clubs, and youth organizations, played a strictly supportive role. The onus of preparing children for a complex world now within their midst fell preponderantly on the community school and its educational support system.

The Challenge to Teachers

Naturally such expanded school responsibilities and costs attracted community-wide concern. School boards, supervisory administrators and staffs, town meetings, regional resource agencies, principals, teachers, school staffs, parent-teacher groups and community volunteers, all became involved in supporting or monitoring school activities. When one considers the respective functions of these various groups, however, it quickly becomes apparent that the teachers have carried the primary load. Town meetings meet once a year, school boards generally once a month in the evenings. Supervisory staffs work out of headquarters offices. Regional agencies serve many constituents spread out over wide areas. Parent-teacher groups and community volunteers help if and when they can. School staffs serve non-teaching functions in non-classroom areas. Building principals have to meet a wide range of tasks. Teaching principals if not in their offices are in their own

classrooms. With the best will in the world all these individuals and groups could do no more than provide back-up support. The primary responsibility belonged to each teacher in his or her classroom meeting with children on a day-to-day and hour-to-hour basis.

Who are the teachers on whom these responsibilities lie? It is one of the ironies of contemporary life that such a major task has gone principally to young and relatively inexperienced people, many with limited ties to the communities they serve. As this paper will show, the contemporary teacher in south central Vermont is likely to have been born, educated, and professionally trained outside the state and to have been drawn into the area by its environmental attractions. Most area teachers today belong to the urban-suburban immigrant culture and bring urban-defined skills and expectations to their professional work. In terms of the board responsibilities of contemporary classroom teachers, such skills may well be what the rural schools most need. It also may be that other skills and other categories of teachers (e.g. old-timers rooted in their local communities) are simply less and less available, so that young immigrants provide the only major source of teachers available to local communities.

The question arises, how are such teachers to cope with their responsibilities and with the unfamiliar and demanding institutional context in which they find themselves? Even if rural communities struck by exurban immigration need young exurban teachers to educate their children, how are such teachers to respond to this need? Even the most superficial examination of teacher turnover suggests that these questions are not easily answered.

Significance of the Teacher Center

It is in the context of such problems and challenges that the Mountain Towns Teacher Center came into being. It was the original premise of this study that a circumstantial relationship existed between the educational needs

of the area and the emergence of the Teacher Center (hereafter MTTC). The study has sought to establish what is the nature of this relationship. It has investigated such questions as, what has been the pattern of educational change in the area, and how does MTTC fit into that pattern? To what extent is MTTC a product of rural community initiative or of metropolitan or consolidated school models imposed on rural education? What were the specific factors resulting in the initiation of MTTC; what problems did it identify, who identified them, and what were its proposed policies for dealing with these problems? What organizational form has MTTC taken, and why; what problems has it encountered and how has it dealt with them? And finally, to what extent was it a response to educational, as opposed to other related problems; what have been its limits, and how does it tie in with other educational responses?

The paper is designed to deal with these questions in turn. Chapter II will analyze patterns of educational change in the area served by MTTC. Chapter III will discuss the specific factors resulting in the creation of MTTC, and Chapter IV, its organizational development. A concluding chapter will review critical issues affecting the development of the Center.

II. Patterns of Local Education Change

MTTC has served eleven public and five private schools spread across eleven townships in three supervisory unions and two states. The townships vary considerably in size and social evolution, and these variations have affected the way in which MTTC has developed. Among these townships Wilmington, the largest and most centrally located, has played a predominant role in the emergence of MTTC. Consequently this chapter will concentrate on describing patterns of educational change in Wilmington, and will review educational changes in two other communities that bore significantly on the work of MTTC.

Wilmington

This is a small but busy agricultural and commercial town situated at the intersection of routes 9 and 100 along the Deerfield Valley in south central Vermont. The township developed on an economy of dairy and mixed farming. In the late nineteenth century it enjoyed a flourishing lumber trade and was connected to northern Massachusetts by a branch railroad. In the 1930s the lumber business declined, the railroad was abandoned and a large hydroelectric reservoir took its place. The town's fortunes (although not its declining farmland) were restored by the establishment of the Mount Snow ski area in the early 1950s and other ski and resort areas in the mid sixties. A whole service industry of lodges, sports shops, restaurants, nightclubs, and crafts stores sprang up to accommodate the rapidly expanding recreational traffic. In turn other small businesses were attracted to the area. Although the ski industry ran into difficulties in the early 1970s, the comparative diversification of its economy and the development of year round tourist business has enabled the town to survive these problems.

Changes in demography reflect these shifting patterns. The town had a registered population of 1,130 in 1880. This grew to 1,483 in 1920 and dropped to 1,169 in 1950. By 1970 it had risen to 1,586. The resident population is expanded sizeably each year by a seasonal influx of people servicing or enjoying the recreational economy.[1]

The educational life of the town has gone through a series of changes reflecting these economic and social transitions. For the purposes of this paper four basic educational stages have been defined: an era of neighborhood, communal education corresponding to the time when the town was primarily an agricultural community; a community era reflecting its commercial development

[1] Vermont Facts and Figures, 1975, Montpelier, Vermont, Office of Statistical Coordination, 1975.

and corresponding to the pattern of consolidation throughout American rural education; an era of institutionalization; and an era of organizational development, which appears to be still in its early stages.[2]

Era of Communal Education: This era began with the origins of the town in the late 18th century and continued until 1893. During this period education served agricultural priorities. The township was divided into neighborhood school districts, each of which established and operated a common school according to its resources and the yearly number of school-aged children. Wilmington had 16 such schools in the 1860s and 13 in the 1880s. Under state law enacted in 1845 the township elected a school superintendent annually at town meeting. The superintendent's duties were to visit schools, supervise the instruction, and until 1889 to examine and certify teachers. During the later 19th century, state or county boards prescribed or recommended appropriate textbooks.

Apart from these provisions the common schools were essentially autonomous neighborhood operations. The teachers were a mix of men and women. In 1882 Wilmington had six men and 21 women teachers. The men were sometimes hired for the winter term when older boys attended school. Biographical data (unfortunately limited to men) indicates that the men teachers were drawn from local youths, most of whom had recently graduated from private academies and who would teach district school for a number of terms before going on to other business. By the later 19th century the village high school was significantly larger than the neighborhood schools and had a principal who might

[2]This scheme differs from that advanced by Rosenfeld and Sher by relating educational transition to rural community transition rather than to the urbanizing philosophy and models espoused by educational reformers. It focusses on specific organizational change at the local level rather than on legislative changes in administration and policy. See Sher, Jonathan P., ed. Education in Rural America, Boulder, Colorado, Westview Press, 1977, Chapter 1.

be a young local man with a college degree. The school year was short; in a neighboring township six months seems to have been the standard period. But in this era of independent farming the common school supplemented rather than dominated education. As a biography of a 19th century farmer, written in 1900, put it: "He received his training on the farm and at the district schools, where he laid the foundation of an excellent character."[3]

Era of Community Education: In 1893 the state abolished the 2,200 neighborhood districts and replaced them with under 300 township school districts.[4] Under the town system in Wilmington the curriculum of the common schools was organized into nine grades and placed under the supervision of the high school principal. A handsome new three story wooden frame building was erected to accommodate the high school and a young Scotsman hired as principal, who had degrees from Middlebury and Harvard. In the fall of 1899 the new building was dedicated.

These developments ushered in an era of community consolidation and centralization of education which lasted until all public education throughout the township was brought under one roof in the late 1950s. 'Consolidation' refers here to the physical process by which the common schools were gradually abandoned and their students transferred to the expanding village school. 'Centralization' refers both to the managerial changes which took place and the overall policies which they reflected. As a 1900 source mockingly described

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[3] Information drawn from Child, Hamilton, Gazeteer and Business Directory of Windham County, Vt., Syracuse, New York, Journal Office, 1884, The Times Press, Wilmington, Vermont, 1900; Kull, Nell M., History of Dover, Vermont, Brattleboro, Vt., The Book Cellar, 1961; Graves, Marjorie W., Stories of Whitingham, 1975; Stone, Mason S., History of Education, State of Vermont, Montpelier, Vt., Capitol City Press, 1935 (?), 66 ff., 200 ff.

[4] Nuquist, Andrew E., Town Government in Vermont, Burlington, Vt., University of Vermont, 1964, 142. The legislation was passed in 1892. See also Stone, History of Education, 59-61, where the reform is characterized as "consonant with the enlarged vision of public education."

the latter, "Whatever may have been the advantages of the well-known 'deestrict schools' there is no doubt that a central control and a uniform plan of work for all the schools gives far greater satisfaction in every particular."[5]

Under this plan the new school system was divided into primary, intermediate, grammar and high school grades. The high school, taught by the principal, provided a three year college preparatory track, emphasizing Latin and English, with opportunity for a fourth year of "advanced work," and an elaborate English-science track of indeterminate length. Few students completed this course of study. They were needed on the farm, or suspicious of academic training. A few boys would come one year to high school,but as one resident put it, "What did the school offer that a boy would like?" Only seven to eight students graduated from high school, and none in her class went on to college. They "didn't talk about college or preparing for college" in her day. Vacations were long because the boys, if there were any at school, had to go home to help with the sugaring.

The persistence of rural values is shown also by the continuation of the common schools. Seven were still in operation through the twenties, and four remained in the thirties. A resident who taught at a common school in Wilmington in the late 1930s recalled the experience as very demanding on the teachers but very positive for the students. Children proceeded at their own pace. There was a good feeling between older and younger children, and the older and better students could help someone hanging behind. Parents visited regularly but the teachers were still very largely on their own. The superintendent would visit each school 4 or 5 times a year to discuss aims and objectives, and teachers would meet at the village school every six weeks after hours.

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[5] Times Press, Wilmington, Vermont, 1900, 16-17. cf. Lane Lancaster: "So far as one can measure such things, education has progressed in rough proportion to the abandonment of the district plan of organization." Cited in Nuquist, Town Government, 142.

Farming holidays continued to prevail, and school work was limited to daylight hours.

But the decline of the farming economy and the general drive towards school consolidation ensured that the village school would continue to expand at the expense of the common schools. Around 1930 the village school added a new commercial room, better science labs and a gymnasium. In the mid 1930s the town briefly abandoned then rejoined the state-mandated supervisory union. Between 1946-51 the last common schools were closed and buses were purchased to bring country children into the village. The village school was now getting crowded, so grades 4-6 were farmed out to separate quarters. The retiring superintendent and a special consultant recommended the development of a regional high school, but none of the townships in question would countenance this loss of local control. Instead Wilmington added a new brick building to its existing school at a cost of $250,000. This provided classrooms for grades 1-5, and a new full sized gymnasium and shop.[6]

Thus by 1956 the village school provided all public education throughout the township for grades 1-12. The growth of the village school provided an increasingly significant role for the principal, so that this era can be characterized organizationally as the era of the principal. The principals of this time were highly visible people, generally men and hired from out of state. They taught, administered, provided guidance to students and direction to the other teachers. The school was now organized by grades from 1-6 and by subjects in the upper school. In the early fifties the grade school teachers, with one exception, were still either born locally or married to local

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[6]Information from personal interviews; Wilmington, 1900; and "A Brief History of the Wilmington Schools", compiled by Robert Ellis and kindly lent to the writer in draft form. Supervisory unions became mandatory in Vermont in 1915. See Sher, Education in Rural America, 32; Stone, History of Education, 72 ff. describes fluctuations in this law during the ensuing decade.

citizens. In the upper school, however, the teachers were from other north-eastern states and in one or two cases further afield. Apart from a business course the high school continued to emphasize college preparatory courses; in 1951 not one graduating student went straight on to college but many of them did so later. The school had its own student magazine and a band with as many as fifty-five players. Athletics was now a major activity and included basketball and soccer. These sports and activities became (and still are) an important aspect of Wilmington's community life.

Era of Institutionalization: This era covers the period from the completion of the consolidated village school in 1956 to the establishment of a separate and ambitiously conceived open plan elementary school in 1970. The era is characterized by growing specialization of function and authority. Schools became responsible for preparing children for an increasingly technological world and assumed more and more of the child-rearing functions. These functions grew beyond the capacity of a single individual or school and were distributed among a variety of roles and institutions. Leadership by principals reached its limits, and an expanded role was assumed by school boards and supervisory union superintendents.

The crucial changes which took place in this era reflect changes sweeping across the country as a whole. This was the period of massive growth in the corporate economy and the welfare state. The Federal government took on a much larger role in national life. Super highways spread across the country, and suburbs mushroomed. In the countryside small scale agriculture continued to decline, but other industries, often managed from distant head offices, moved in to diversify rural economies. Internationally, Sputnik ushered in the space era and with it the fear throughout the U. S. that its scientific and technological education might be lagging behind that of the

Soviet Union.

Wilmington was in no way immune to these changes. Farming land gave way to ski slopes and lodges. Land values climbed and real estate offices "mushroomed into existence" as the recreational culture began to take root. The new economy brought in a highly mobile and functionally defined culture of seasonal tourists and workers, nuclear families looking for second homes in burgeoning resort developments, and resident small business families servicing the ski industry. The increase in people and business necessitated a corresponding increase in town services. A town manager, a fully equipped police department, and a community health center, came into existence to bring order to a degree of change unparalleled in the town's history.[7]

A comparable institutionalization of services took place in the educational system. In the mid fifties a private kindergarten was established; in the sixties it set the goal of enrolling all children throughout the township of eligible age and largely succeeded in doing so. In the public school a debate over whether to add an agricultural or industrial arts room was resolved in favor of the latter. Students wishing to specialize in agriculture were to be sent to an agricultural school in the center of the state. In 1958 the school passed its first formal accreditation study. In the early 60s a counselling service was introduced; by the end of the decade this required a full-time specialist. The school established and developed its own library. In the curriculum the high school science program was expanded and a free elective system developed. Opportunities for vocational education were increased through the establishment of a program at the Mount Anthony Union High School in Bennington, some twenty miles distant.

This expansion in curriculum and other services was not accompanied by a corresponding increase in the supply of teachers. During this period teacher

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[7] Information from personal observations, interviews and Philip Angell, "Wilmington Identity Restored", Vermont Life, Summer, 1977.

turnover increased, qualified teachers were scarce (especially in science and math), and few were of local provenance. In World War II, another era of teacher shortage, the superintendent had met his needs by going around the town and knocking on doors! During the mid-sixties the Wilmington principal was obliged to telephone all over the country, and to spend the entire summer looking for new teachers. Qualifications gave way to availability, and teachers were pressured to teach subjects for which they were inadequately prepared. Despite these added demands, teachers continued to be master in their own classroom. If they met it was to discuss problem children, not teaching methodology and seldom curriculum.

A combination of these institutional limitations and an increase of non-indigeneous parents accustomed to more extensive services prompted a growing local interest in "better education." In the 1960s this search was led by local school board members and the district superintendent. The lure of college education provided the motivating force. More college-educated parents now lived in town. The reviving economy put more cash income into the work force, and this enabled more children to extend their education through 12th grade and beyond. Younger teachers were by now college-educated and trained. Finally, the growing institutionalization of the national and world economy placed an increasing premium on post-secondary education.[8] The days were gone when rural children could simply go to school to learn the basics and put in time. Parents conscious of these changes looked at their high school and found not enough emphasis on achievement and too much turnover among high school teachers. Ambitious families could either take children out

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[8] Cf Kimball, Solon T. and James E. McLellan, Jr., Education and the New America, New York, Random, 1962, especially Chapter 6. This was the decade which saw nationally the phenomenal growth of the Community College system.

of school and send them to private academies (as had happened 50 years previously), or find ways to improve the existing public school education. The search for better education became an effort to improve the public schools, attract better teachers, keep children at home and increase access to post-secondary education. Board members came into office who shared these goals. In the late 1960s all Wilmington school board members were college educated, a remarkable transformation of a community agency and reflective of the pressures of the times.

To implement these goals the board again adopted the standard policy of developing a union high school with a neighboring township, whose own high school was underutilized. This plan was defeated by all the townships involved. The board's next thought was to replace the high school, however this proposal failed to win state support. Meanwhile the influx of families largely with younger children placed increasing pressure on existing school facilities. Finally the decision was made to build a new and separate elementary school.

The board and superintendent were now able to give practical form to the educational aspirations ofthe times. As one board member put it, they decided on a "modern concept school, more than just a cluster of classrooms, where youngsters could have fun and also be educated." The school should be quite separate and with its own playgrounds, a place where younger children would not be dominated by older, and where the teachers could develop their own educational focus. Because of the volatile growth of the community, it should avoid the closed inflexible classroom design erected in the 1950s.

In view of these considerations the board was attracted to the open plan concept. Board members visited schools all over New England and especially

a new open plan middle school in the north of the state. Convinced that the design functioned the board took some elementary school teachers to this school for several days to see it in action. The architects of the school were appointed to draw up a design which was to be financed through the Federal revenue sharing funds. Then the board instituted an intnesive public relations campaign to build up community-wide support. The campaign was successful; according to local sources the school was the first new elementary school in the state to be approved in town meeting on the first vote. A site had been selected two miles north of the village center, which met state specifications. A new principal was found who understood conservative educational practice but was receptive to innovative ideas. He in turn hired four new teachers who were to bring youth and excitement to the experience of the existing staff. By the Fall of 1970 the new school was ready to open for classes.[9]

Era of Organizational Development: The completion of the new school marked a watershed in Wilmington's educational life. Less than twenty years after the demise of the last common schools the town had redivided its school system. It now had its own distinctive elementary school, erected at a cost of $1 million dollars and designed to the most modern specifications. With the school came a new principal and teachers chosen to match this forward looking commitment. At the same time the supervisory union had hired a new superintendent with experience in management of open plan schools.

These moves led into an era characterized here as one of organizational development. The immediacy of the period inhibits summative analysis, but certain distinguishing conditions and policies stand out. The community as a

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[9] Open education in Vermont had received a strong boost from the State Department's "Vermont Design for Education," issued in 1968. This is reproduced in Nyquist, Ewald B. and Gene R. Hawes, Open Education, New York, Bantam, 1972, 56-62.

whole became more divided over educational goals, and the task of setting such goals fell increasingly on teachers. Two developments occurred which reflect this increased responsibility placed on teachers: first, the establishment by teachers in several townships of local chapters of the Vermont Education Association; second, the establishment and development of the MTTC.

The need for reorganization in this period was underscored by the uncertainties in economic and political life locally and nationwide. These uncertainties made themselves felt in Wilmington's schools. In the high school a crisis was precipitated in 1971 by the appointment of a new principal brought in from the outside to liberalize the school's curriculum and policies. The school quickly became divided over his policies, discipline broke down and students stopped attending classes. Victimized by his own policies, and physically abused by older students, the principal had a nervous breakdown, left town at Thanksgiving and never returned. For two months neither the board nor the community at large knew what to do. In January, a teacher was appointed acting principal ("shoved in" is the way one informant put it). He restored a semblance of order to what was by then a poisoned atmosphere. The episode left the school disoriented and the community bewildered. The following year half the staff were new, and the school slowly returned to normal.

The new elementary school also got off to a shaky start. Before the Fall term began, parents alarmed by the novelty of the building and the unfamiliarity of the principal and many of the staff, circulated a petition to fire the principal. The school opened nearly a month late. To adjust the old and new teachers to education in an open plan school, staff from the University of Massachusetts were brought up to teach workshops on open classroom teaching. Several sources have described these workshops as a disaster, principally

because they interposed ideas on teachers and a community who were far from ready for such innovation in teaching practice. Some teachers began trying out these ideas and a variety of teaching styles were soon in action. Walls were pushed back, and children were permitted to explore the building and sit on the carpeted floors. Parents especially angered by this loss of traditional discipline began entering the building to "collect evidence." To defuse these problems, the principal organized a parent newsletter and spent many hours listening to parent complaints. Staff organized quarterly grade level meetings to explain classroom activities to parents. Several parents on the Parent Teacher Committee and board members attempted to mediate between the staff and the community at large.

These responses worked well enough to enable the staff to survive the immediate unrest. However, the problems posed by the new school were sufficiently far-ranging to continue after the unrest had subsided. From the viewpoint of teachers, parents tend to be uneasy towards schools, and they were, as one teacher put it, totally afraid of this one. It looked rich and loose. It was built on borrowed money by distant architects. It was located away from the village center on former farmland, and all children had to be bused there. Whereas in the past the elementary teachers had been native citizens or people with long associations in the community, half the new staff were young and unknown, and some were male. These young teachers would know nothing of established community values. Parents were afraid they would be on the lax side, and were unhappy with the freedom accorded to children by the novel building and teaching methods. Some hoped that the children would fail their achievement tests and so expose the inadequacies of the school.

Behind those anxieties lay more basic fears about the welfare of children in a community experiencing rapid transition. Many children in Wilmington

today come from divorced, transient or latch key families, most of which are a product of the new recreational culture. While the evidence of these conditions is impressionistic, it is shared by many informants. To quote some: "the problem with a ski area-vacation area is that it brings in a lot of unsettled, insecure, single parent families into the area. In one of my classes twelve out of twenty-two children were from divorced families, and only one of these was from an old time family." "Every year I've had children who came to school in September and were gone by December. Often they came from one-parent families who lacked meaningful employment." "Every spring there is a new round of divorces and people moving in in December and out in April." A more generic problem, noted by one teacher, is that half are liable to be from out of state. In the late sixties a heavy traffic in hard drugs began coming into Wilmington. High school students were exposed to this traffic. The school experienced bomb scares as well as drugs. Yet parents were reluctant to admit that their children could be on drugs. As one parent remarked, "A lot of our friends were oblivious to the drug problem. Parents just really didn't know what their children were thinking and talking about." As to what the children might be thinking about, several sources remarked on the lack of pride in children's self concept, in the problems which they faced in defining their working lives and applying what they learnt in school. Asked about problems in literacy, a teacher replied that she did not see any decline in literacy. "The problem is that students don't know what to do with it."

These stresses in family life help to explain why responsibility for coping with uncertainties facing children today has fallen increasingly on teachers. Teachers are now the main source of informed adult contact with children, and for a considerable number the main or only source of adult

guidance and stability. These responsibilities have placed demands on teachers unanticipated in either the local teaching role or in professional teacher preparation. Young teachers assuming these responsibilities found themselves underpaid, isolated, and lacking in professional guidance. At this time little focus existed for curriculum or staff development. Local administrators were preoccupied with administrative tasks and boards with financial control. If teachers were to fulfill their professional needs, they would have to do so on their own initiative and through better use of existing resources.[10]

Dover

This township is adjacent to Wilmington on its north east border. Although the north branch of the Deerfield River flows through West Dover, most of the township lies on mountainous land over 2,000 feet above sea level. The large Mount Snow ski and resort area occupies the northwest corner. Originally the town consisted of scattered farms and hamlets connected by dirt roads, some barely passable in winter and spring. The population reached a peak of 900 in 1810. The opening of the Mid West caused a steady erosion of the farming community, and the registered population declined to a low of 250 in 1950. By this time the township had coalesced around two small villages, East and West Dover, separated by a substantial mountain. The development of Mt. Snow rescued the town from near oblivion. West Dover has now become a flourishing resort community; East Dover remains a village of scattered homesteads which supplies manpower to the resort industry or to

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10 Describing the enactment of a state-wide free textbook law in 1894, Stone wrote that "following its passage, the various publishing houses threw their agents into the state and deluged school boards with samples of text books." According to his study, published in 1935, very few alterations had since been made in the law. History of Education, 201. A controversy in 1940 over use of a Marxist-oriented textbook caused the State Board of Education to reiterate that textbook selection be determined locally. True, Marshall, and Judith Cyronak, Vermont State Department of Education, 1900-1968, 1968, 37-38. In practice choice of books seems to have been left to individual teachers on the basis of available funds. Limited staff development was provided through state helping teachers. See below, Chapter 5.

the nearby town of Brattleboro.

The development of the township's school system follows the general pattern described for Wilmington; however, the long decline in population and the subsequent division of the town along occupational and cultural lines have imposed special conditions on that development. The first school opened in 1790 and throughout most of the 19th century the township was divided into 9 school districts. Continuous school records since 1858 show a steady decline in student enrollments and reduction in schools. By the early 1950s there were two school districts left, and the students in the West Dover district were being bused to the Wilmington school.

In 1957, by which time the local economy had begun to revive, the town erected a consolidated elementary (1-8) school on the old town common. By this time older children in East Dover were sent on to high schools in towns to the east and north, while those in West Dover went on to Wilmington. (Despite their economic and educational ties, Dover and Wilmington belong to different supervisory unions.) In the 1960s the continued development of the recreation industry built up a new resident population, especially in West Dover. Within a few years the consolidated school was unable to handle the increase in student enrollments. The board decided to build a new 1-6 grade elementary school. An open plan model was selected and a well-known architect from the West Dover resort community chosen to design the building. The new school was erected on a special plot equidistant from the two villages but having no organic relationship to any existing community settlements or facilities. Despite some opposition, 7th and 8th grade students were sent off to the various high schools serving the two villages. The school opened in 1972 and a year later a kindergarten room was added to the existing design.

As these developments show, the Dover school system passed through the communal, community and institutional phases described above. However, there are several significant variations from the Wilmington pattern. Because Dover was unable to evolve a nuclear center, its communal phase laster far longer than Wilmington's, in fact until the middle of the 20th century. Up to this point, Dover remained a far more distinctively rural community than Wilmington, defined by the traditional rural problem of agricultural decay and lack of alternative commercial or industrial resources. Its children and schools reflected these conditions. Teachers who taught in both Wilmington and Dover common schools before World War II were more aware in Dover of poverty, lack of resources and behavioral problems. As one put it, "The Dover children were right off the farm. Some of them hadn't seen anything beyond their own farmyards." Another remembers having to teach and also do her own janitor work. She was boarded one mile from school and walked both ways. There were no foundations under the schoolhouse, and she had chilblains on her feet throughout the winter. Some of the children were from a very "backwards area" and did everything they could to pester the teacher.

The development of the community school undoubtedly led to a great improvement in educational conditions. In the 1960s the school had a teaching principal who took grades 7-8, and two teachers who divided grades 1-6. The children were now organized more by age groupings and curriculum and less by residence. In some ways, this reorganization was more apparent than real. Cliquishness and cultural differences separated the farm-bound East Dover children from the wealthier and more mobile immigrant children in West Dover. Learning disabilities, in some cases running through entire families, prevented the correlation of age and ability groups. In effect, the school continued to harbor the nuclear patterns of communal education even while adopting

the consolidated and graduated form of the community school.

The erection of the open plan school was intended to permit the development described here as institutionalization. The older students were sent off to obtain the specialized education which high school provides. Those in grades 1-6 were installed in a fine, modern building equipped with resources not even matched by Wilmington's new elementary school. Older teachers experienced in the communal traditions were eased out and young teachers trained to the specializations of modern education hired in their place. However, the development of the new school lacked the systematic planning which characterized the development of Wilmington's. The new staff lacked experience in open plan or open classroom education, and no training was provided. Disciplinary problems erupted and the new playground equipment and resource room media facilities remained unused. Parents of modest means were put off by the new "million dollar school, which "reeked of the ski industry and wealth," and which was hidden from sight behind an access road. As one community member, voicing these fears, commented, "Why should children go to school in a place so much better than the home in which they live?"

As the experience of many new open plan schools shows, initial problems with student behavior and parent atittudes are to be expected. A combination of community support and staff competence should enable these problems to be brought under control. Dover lacked the cohesiveness needed to absorb such a radically new school. While the recreational community had been developing fast, the indigenous rural culture had remained close to its family and communal traditions. In addition the supervisory union staff, located some distance away, were caught up in administrative problems at another school and were unable to provide the kind of leadership available to Wilmington. Without such support and without the necessary experience, the new staff were doomed to lose credibility. Within a year the first principal was fired and two teachers left.

The second principal was fired a year later. Neither of these men had been able to develop staff cohesion or loyalty. Parents started taking their children away from the school and educating them elsewhere. Finally a group of parents, angered by the lack of leadership and discipline at the school, formed their own curriculum committee, enforced an entirely new curriculum on the staff, and cuased several more teachers to resign. This chronic instability continued until 1977, almost five years after the school had opened.

This unhappy experience illustrates problems resulting from lack of successful institutionalization at either the school or community-wide level. The Board itself was divided between the two villages and controlled for fifteen years by a single family. The Superintendent's office was unable to exercise leadership or advise the Board on qualified appointments. Principals were unable to implement policies,and some teachers were unable to manage children either in their classrooms or on the playground. No special resources were available for staff development within the school system. Thus it was left for an organizational response in the form of an ad hoc citizens' curriculum committee to occur outside the formal school system. But such a development did not enable teachers to meet their day to day responsibilities. In the end teachers at Dover, as at Wilmington, had to find their own ways to master the educational needs of the present time.[11]

Readsboro

Readsboro township is situated southwest of Wilmington along the Massachusetts border. The village center lies in deeply wooded valleys enclosed by steep hillsides. These physical conditions have created a settlement

[11]Information from Kull, History of Dover, and from interviews and personal observation.

which is both intimate and isolated. Originally Readsboro was an agricultural community, but the terrain is unfavorable to cultivation and only one dairy farm now remains. In the late 19th century the economy was rescued by some Massachusetts entrepreneurs who discovered large stands of virgin timber. In twenty years they erected pulp and paper mills and a chair factory; they also built a railroad from Hoosac Tunnel to Readsboro, which they later extended to Wilmington. Four hundred Italian immigrants from New York were imported to work on these projects. These people, Tyroleans in origin, settled in the village, and their descendants are there today. Under this stimulus the population increased from 740 in 1880 to a high of 1250 in 1910. By then the virgin timber was running low and the original developers had sold off their properties. The economy again went into slow decline. In the 1920s development of a hydroelectric dam doomed the railroad, and in the late 30s the Wilmington extension was washed out by floods. Tourism kept the original Readsboro line going into the early 1950s. The pulp mill burnt down, but the chair factory continues to provide employment for women, and the old paper mill at nearby Munroe Bridge provides work for men. The population had declined steadily to 640 in 1970, but power stations and a new nuclear electric plant just over the Massachusetts border have brought some renewed prosperity to the general area.[12]

The evolution of the Readsboro schools reflects these ups and downs in economic fortunes. In 1880 the town had 8 common schools with an aggregate attendance of 200 students. For a brief period it ran its own high school, but high school students are now sent either to nearby Whitingham or to a much larger school in North Adams, Mass. At least one common school continued

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[12] Aldrich, Lewis Cass, History of Bennington County, Syracuse, New York, Mason, 1889; Carman, Bernard R., Hoot Toot and Whistle, The Story of the Hoosac Tunnel and Wilmington Railroad, Brattleboro, Vt., Stephen Green Press, 1963; Wilmington, Vt., 1900; Vermont Facts and Figures, 1975.

until after World War II. The present school is a consolidated modern but unpretentious brick building housing grades K-8. Enrollments are decreasing; last year there were 94 students.

Despite its shrinking population, Readsboro offers several strengths as an educational community. It retains a strongly-knit and cohesive family life. The school is the center of the town's social activity; there is no tourism and next to no exurban immigration to dissipate its cultural identity. This is a laboring community with conservative values towards money and education. Teachers are respected, and voluntary work at the school is common. Most children come to school well cared for, and school events are well attended. Beyond the school, however, local cultural resources are very limited. There is a community park, a local history society, and two churches. In other respects the community remains self-contained and protected from the outside world.

Thus the initiative for the cultural and educational life of the community is very much in the hands of the school and its teachers. Because of these conditions, teachers have been able to exercise considerable leadership. All teachers tend to put in more time at the school than is formally required. Last year one organized an ambitious and successful science fair, which drew wide attendance from other schools and communities. This year two parents who are part-time music teachers put on a school production of HMS Pinafore. Readsboro teachers recently organized a local chapter of the Vermont Education Association. Finally, several were active in the development of the Mountain Towns Teacher Center.

III. Creation of MTTC

The idea of establishing a teacher center in south central Vermont grew out of a course in open education offered at Wilmington's Deerfield Valley

Elementary School (henceforth DVES) in the Fall of 1973. The two instructors for this course were both on the DVES staff: Sidney Dupont had become the school's second principal; and Casey Murrow had joined the staff when the school opened. Both had personal experience of British primary education; Dupont had studied with Vincent Rogers, a well known specialist on modern British Primary schools, while Murrow two years previously had co-authored with his wife a book on the subject, based on visits to numerous British schools and classrooms.[1]

The course attracted considerable interest among local teachers and enabled them to exchange common interests and problems which arose in their work as teachers. Recognition that these interests were widely shared and that in Britain teacher centers existed to serve such interests, led the class to consider the possibility of forming their own teacher center. With the support of a volunteer group drawn from this class, Murrow developed a proposal which was funded by the State under Federal Title III funds. In this way MTTC came into existence.

Conditions Favoring Establishment of MTTC: the Transformation of Rural Teaching Practice

Generalized analyses of rural education, particularly those based on urban conceptions of progress, have tended to see rural education as underdeveloped or backward and to have equated evidence of progress with consolidation.[2] This

[1]Murrow, Casey and Liza, Children Come First, The Inspired Work of English Primary Schools, New York, American Heritage Press, 1971.

[2]See Hughes, Larry W. and Dolphus L. Spence, "Attitudes and Orientations of Rural Groups and Effects on Educational Decision-making and Innovation in Rural School Districts," ERIC/CRESS, July 1971, esp. p. 19-22, for a synthesis of this thinking. A classic statement can be found in the President's National Advisory Commission on Rural Poverty, The People Left Behind, Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1967. Several studies critical of orthodox claims for consolidation are found in Sher, Education in Rural America. See especially Stuart Rosenfeld "Centralization versus Decentralization: A Case Study of Rural Education in Vermont", p. 206-268.

treatment no longer satisfies the complexity of contemporary rural life and its increasing integration with national life as a whole. Nor does it account for change within the rural context. Schools which appear backward from one viewpoint may seem radically transformed from another. Certainly those discussed above have experienced considerable economic and social change, and with it systemic transformations in educational practice.

The scope and irreversibility of change in rural life is perhaps the most significant finding. No matter how small or rural, the townships examined here have changed dramatically since their early days, and have done so in widely divergent ways. Educational conditions reflect this unstability. Because education is a rational process subject to future aspirations as well as past conditions, educational systems here as elsewhere have sought to impose order on the instability of their cultural settings. That order has itself gone through structural change, furthermore the pace of change has quickened with each major transformation. Consequently rural education today is if anything more unstable and subject to external influences than ever.

Our account concentrated on changes bearing on teaching practice. During the communal era schools and teachers reflected local values. Individuals who taught school in their youth were likely to go on to other local employment and were community members rather than career teachers. Teacher turnover was very high, although some people (usually women) continued to return to teaching over a period of twenty or thirty years.[3] This constant shuffle of teaching personnel was balanced by a standardized curriculum emphasizing normative skills more than content, and by the localized values and familiarity of the teachers. Changes in student enrollment were primarily a function of growing up, although emigration and immigration was sufficient to keep the future of the schools themselves unstable and precarious.

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[3]Kull, History of Dover, contains an appendix listing names of all teachers in all common schools from 1859, when records were established, till 1957 when Dover's consolidated school opened.

Consolidation transformed these conditions. Introduction of vocational and professional content into high school curriculum brought with it teachers who would represent the changing demands of vocational and professional education. As institutionalization of schools proceeded, high school teachers were appointed from outsiders, for whom teaching was a career rather than a community activity. Community identity survived longer among the elementary school teachers for whom teaching remained closer to the values and substance of home and community life. However, the transformations wrought on the latter by contemporary social mobility and transiency ensured the demise of the community teacher. Boards and administrators, intent on pursuing 'better education', helped to hasten the departure of the old and generally modestly trained community teachers and their replacement by young careerists trained to the methodologies and curricula of modern elementary school teaching.

Furthermore young career teachers themselves sought out teaching positions in Vermont, especially since the late 1960s when the recreational culture had established its appeal. At this time innovative policies of the State Department of Education provided a further attraction. The Vermont Design for Education, issued in 1968, advocated a set of educational goals close to the philosophy and practice of open education developed in England. It argued that learning should be geared to individual need and interests, especially at the early childhood level. To promote this approach teachers were asked to function as partners and guides, who could relate education to personal experience and mobilize community resources to support student educational goals. At the same time the Department was able to set up five locally and federally funded Regional Action Centers, designed to assist local school districts in improving instruction. Although most of these centers did not survive the federal funding period, they contributed to the atmosphere of innovation which characterized state educational policy at this time.[4]

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[4]True and Cryonak, Vermont State Department of Education, 53. The writer is indebted to Casey Murrow for bringing the work of these centers to his attention.

Thus local and statewide changes in educational practice and cultural developments during the late 60s combined to draw young career teachers into the state's educational workforce.[5] Today when one looks around the rural schools of south central Vermont there is scarcely one old-time community teacher to be found. The teachers are almost all young and representative of the exurban migration into Vermont. Most do not live in the communities in which they teach and several, particularly if teaching principals, prefer to keep home and job separate. Despite these precautions teacher turnover remains high, although it has certainly been reduced by the impact of local and national recessions on the educational job market. The greater instability today is in the transiency of students.

When one examines this situation in terms of its human implications, the problems confronting today's children and teachers become apparent. The basic problem is that while schools have been consolidating human relations have been drawing apart. Divorce, transiency, mobility and migration have ensured that children can no longer be sure of knowing or co-existing with their parents or teachers or each other from one year to the next. Conversely teachers can no longer be sure of knowing all of their children or colleagues; if they know the latter it is on the job and in a limited institutional sense, rather than in the community through shared community life.

A second problem arises from what happens when teachers and children are brought together under these conditions. Teachers hired to teach modern rationalized curriculum, for which youth may be a better guarantee of credentials than age, are confronted with children who need emotional as much as rational direction. This emotional curriculum is as much a presence in the rural schools

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[5] The present research indicates that the recreational culture was a much larger drawing card for young teachers than state-wide educational reforms; however the latter were significant in attracting leaders and initiators among the new teachers. The distinction deserves further research.

of south central Vermont as it is in the more widely studied urban schools. But teachers in these schools rarely have colleagues with whom they can share problems of similar grade levels, because the schools are too small. Schools served by MTTC include 8 with fewer than 4 full-time staff.

Finally, teachers lured by the recreational attractions of rural life find that teaching in small rural schools has its own special confinements, among them long working and travelling hours, lack of job mobility and the cultural restrictions of a mountainous rural environment.

It is these problems that underly the complaint often expressed by local teachers of isolation and stagnation. From the viewpoint of local citizens with strong community roots, the townships of south central Vermont are not isolated, for they are the source of local cultural definition. But for teachers with roots and background elsewhere, the towns and schools are or can easily become so. One outstanding teacher who has now left this profession spoke of the distance, isolation, lack of social mix and draining experience of teaching in a rural area, especially in spring. Another said that "a teacher here can really get into a vacuum. People don't always realize how isolated they are. You can simply get used to it." A widely travelled teacher agreed that "isolation and stagnation occur also in city schools, but in the country you have the smallness to cope with, and also one misses the cultural stimulus of the cities." Another who came straight from graduate school felt isolated for two years, had no connections and felt "a desperate need to talk to other teachers." A teaching principal admitted "getting into ruts because there's not enough exposure. We have professional days but we do experience professional stagnation." Community expectation had a hand in limiting professional acceptance. As this informant put it, "The road crew equate us with other town functions." Another teacher, citing a view shared by many teachers, complained that "the native people have a basic distruct for the teachers, because they're outsiders."

As these comments imply, younger career teachers found themselves experiencing isolation and lack of recognition at a time of cultural instability and economic retrenchment. As people with career rather than community identification it would depend on the teachers themselves to respond to the problems affecting their professional lives.

Development of Interest in British Primary Education

In 1971 the Vermont State Department of Education identified 31 public schools (24 elementary and 7 secondary) and 25 private "alternative" schools (18 elementary, 7 secondary) that were working toward open education. Wilmington was not among the communities listed in this report.[6] However, conditions now existed locally for responding to state pressure to implement the Vermont Design for Education: An open plan school, a receptive Board, a supportive superintendent, a teacher who was already a published author on the subject, and not far away in North Bennington, an elementary school that was vigorously promoting, and training teachers for, open education. In addition, teachers and children were becoming adjusted to the unfamiliar open plan design. By 1972, when Sidney Dupont came in as principal, the school was ready to move more consciously towards open education.

Ready to move, but not by any means there. As a teacher, hired at this time, pointed out, just because DVES was an open plan school, this did not mean that it was teaching open education.[7] Also, she felt it would require

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[6]The data is reproduced in Nyquist and Hawes, Open Education, 55 and 395-6.

[7]The differences are succinctly outlined by Ruth C. Flurry, "Open Education: What Is It", in Nyquist and Hawes, Open Education, 190-8.

tremendous training to make an open classroom concept of education work.[8] Dupont's approach to this task was to model the role of an English head teacher in a way that would promote the informal philosophy and practice of modern British primary education.[9] He developed a mathematics lab employing Nuffield materials, helped to build an adventure playground, devised materials, established interest centers, set up displays, worked closely with children, often on a one-to-one basis, and spurred on other teachers. Teachers reported learning from him that enrichment is important, that every child has special interests, that displays can be effective as a teaching technique. Other teachers, supported by small 'mini-grants' from the Vermont Department of Education, set up a greenhouse, a darkroom, and a ski program. Some ran physical education and music programs. Murrow obtained federal funding for an environmental and career education program and he and other teachers organized and financed field trips to Cape Cod. Through the initiative of its own teachers, the school acquired so many extra resources that it attracted a stream of visitors and teacher interns and became a source of envy to teachers in other, less physically attractive and educationally active schools.

In Fall, 1973, Dupont and Murrow decided to offer their course on British informal education. The course, entitled "The Open Classroom" was set up with graduate credit from the University of Vermont and qualified its participating

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[8] As a strong proponent of open education, Silberman argued that teachers who have tried both approaches "insist that informal teaching is no more difficult than formal teaching and is much more rewarding." See his chapter "It Can Happen Here" reproduced from Crisis in the Classroom, in Nyquist and Hawes, Open Education, Chapter 7. Other authorities noted that the decisionmaking demands that open education places on teachers might seem unrealistic for anyone other than the most skilled practitioner. See Bussis, Anne M., Edward A. Chittenden and Marianne Amarel, Beyond Surface Curriculum, Boulder, Colorado, Westview Press, 1976, Chapter 2.

[9] The role of head teachers in modern British primary schools is extensively discussed in Murrow, Children Come First. See especially Chapter 6.

teachers for partial reimbursement of expenses. As the first such course to be offered in the area, it attracted teachers from a large number of local schools. The course dealt with the theory of the modern British primary schools, their experience-oriented approach to education and utilization of special skills of teachers. In keeping with the practical emphasis of British informal education, the course employed a hands-on approach. Participating teachers brought in and demonstrated their individual skills. One discussed well-drilling, others the more customary crafts of pottery and weaving. All discussed how these activities might be applied to the curriculum of elementary school children. Participants also discussed their needs, and it was from this discussion of common needs that the idea of developing a teacher center germinated.

Recalling this process, Murrow remarked:

> That was really the first time that I heard from teachers in a fairly wide, geographic area some common needs and interests and wishes for support. One of the needs, in terms of curriculum, was simply to capitalize on limited funds. It was easy to see, just by the stories people would tell about projects they had worked on in one school, that it was just the equipment or materials that were needed by a teacher in another school to run a project with. The teacher and the materials often didn't coincide in the same place, and that was one suggestion when we started talking about teacher centers - really for a repository of materials and whatnot.
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> Did you start talking about the teacher center in that course?
>
> Yes.
>
> That was part of your methods?
>
> No, it wasn't to begin with, but it became clear that some kind of resource like that would be exciting, so we did talk about it.
>
> What made it become clear?

> To me? The things they were asking for. But you see I had a strong bias anyway in that direction because of what I had seen in England. At that point there were really very few teacher centers in this country, and it would have been hard for anyone else in that group to have those experiences and therefore to be able to see the excitement of that sort of thing.

As this account indicates, the course was the critical event in bringing together the forces from which MTTC could be generated: teachers aware of isolation and eager to exchange experiences and skills, colleagues aware of reforms in British primary education under comparable conditions of retrenchment. These reforms included not only the whole methodology of open classroom learning but the material and institutional services which supported it. By then teacher centers had emerged in a number of counties in England as a practical way of combining and consolidating those services.[10]

Proposal of MTTC

The teachers who took the class on the open classroom (or a subsequent class offered next spring in an area high school) realized quickly that it had offered a way to counteract their professional problems. One said, "It helped to get me thinking creatively again." Another said it looked as if a teacher center could facilitate getting across the ideas that Murrow and Dupont were teaching. A core group, led by Murrow, and consisting of teachers from several elementary schools, came together to brainstorm ideas for a proposal. Murrow himself talked with many teachers and administrators about the idea of a teacher center and organized public meetings advertised with notices sent out to all teachers in the Windham Southwest Supervisory Union in which the DVES school is located. Murrow commented that "I didn't have much of a response to the organized meetings because it was incredibly hard to explain what it was

[10] Murrow, Children Come First, Chapter 7, provided a brief account of the state of British teachers centers in 1970. A few class participants had visited some of these centers since that time.

I was talking about or what it was going to do for them." Nevertheless a larger sense of teacher needs emerged from these discussions. They included, in Murrow's words, "fairly traditional requests for help in schools with curricula and methods" along with "a sense of the teacher being on the firing line day after day and always needful of some kind of support, encouragement and new energy." Another teacher, inspired by the course, felt that they needed a place for courses "especially for teachers with families who couldn't just take off and go to the state university four hours drive away." As she pointed out, "This is very important for a teacher in not becoming static."

Although the decision to plan a center was based closely on British educational practice, it was clear to Murrow that the proposed center could not simply follow British blueprints. British teacher centers had been initiated by Local Education Authorities. Their main purpose is to provide teachers throughout the Authority with a convenient place to assess instructional needs and resources. Often Local Authorities would buy and convert an old house, and appoint a full-time warden. The Center would run week-end residential sessions, administer advisory services and act as a depository for centrally purchased materials. With these materials and financial resources, it would soon become an appealing place for teachers to visit and use.[11]

Local control of educational management and finance precluded the development in south central Vermont of a comparably central agency. The aspects of British centers that did appear transferable consisted of the small scale services that they offered, and perhaps the advisory role,

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[11] Brand, John, "The Role of Teachers' Centres in the In-service Education of Teachers" in Elizabeth Adams, In-Service Education and Teachers' Centres, Oxford, England, Pergaman Press, 1975, describes the various functions of local teacher centers from the viewpoint of a warden (director). L.C. Taylor, "Reflections on British Teachers' Centers" in Kathleen Devaney, ed., Essays on Teachers' Centers, San Francisco, Cal., Far West Lab., 1977, provides a critical view of their usefulness to in-service education & curriculum development. Thornbury, Robt. E., "The British Teacher Center", in Sharon Feiman, Teacher Centers, What Place in Education, Chicago, University of Chicago, 1978, offers a brief but informal view of future prospects for British centers.

developed by some British Local Education Authorities from a tradition established by progressive government education inspectors.[12] The Vermont Regional Action Centers, scaled down to accomodate local planning, provided a second model. Based on these Murrow and his colleagues conceived the projected center as an informal organization serving a small geographic area but bridging several school districts. It would provide a combination of support services in the classrooms, materials and equipment in a central location, and the opportunity for local teachers to take organized workshops and graduate credit courses.

The proposal written by Murrow summarized these views and pointed the direction in which the Center would proceed. Its basic position is that "there is a need in all these somewhat isolated towns to promote good, child-centered teaching practices." The proposal argued that many children were isolated and had few experiences outside their local community, the towns and teachers "without exception" were isolated from the educational services of Brattleboro and Bennington, and the towns themselves "in large measure" were isolated from each other by real or imagined differences. With regard to child-centered teaching, it said, "It is vital that all of us better understand the whole child with whom we work. Teachers need support and encouragement for any innovative effort....In the realm of support, encouragement, and teacher education, a teachers center...can be of great use."

The proposal sought to create a more innovative and successful learning environment for children by encouraging regular classroom teachers in the development of their work. It proposed to increase teacher skills through greater access to educational resources, to improve school-community relations, to improve instruction through development of teaching materials, and to serve as a model for low budget service centers. The Center would be situated

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[12] For a good example see the chapter on Marion Richardson and Robin Tanner in van der Eyken, Willem and Barry Turner, Adventures in Education, London, Penguin, 1969.

at DVES. Its director would be an experienced teacher who had kept abreast of new developments. It would provide a resource library, teaching materials, a professional research area, and borrowable resources for creating teaching aids. The Center would be open on certain nights and weekends, and its staff would include a part time assistant director. It would offer workshops and courses, and non-evaluative classroom support services. It would encourage gatherings of teachers to discuss individual children, catalog equipment and materials in member schools, respond quickly to teacher requests for ideas and materials, recruit community volunteers, develop a community resource directory, and disseminate information through a newsletter. All this, plus an elaborate evaluation and dissemination design, was to be accomplished on a proposed Federal cash budget of $25,600 supplemented by mostly in-kind local resources valued at $9,000.

The proposal thus outlined represents a calculated effort to apply services developed mainly under the "child-centered" reforms of British primary education to the problems experienced by teachers in the mountain towns of south central Vermont. Children are its ultimate beneficiaries. However, the strategy is fundamentally a classroom-instructional strategy, designed by teachers for teachers. Twenty-six teachers discussed and confirmed the stated needs and debated and revised the initial abstract prepared by one of their colleagues. The Center was to be directed by a teacher and cater to the needs of teachers as and when they perceived them. To confirm this teacher orientation the teachers involved in planning the Center established a governing board made up of one voting member form each participating school. The board would be responsible for early organization of the Center and would appoint a committee of teachers to hire a director. Support for this board was confirmed at a meeting of 36 area teachers (out of a possible 108).[13]

[13] The details are from the original proposal, dated February 6, 1974.

Another significant point about the proposal is that its strategy is geared primarily toward elementary school children and teachers. One reason for this approach is that educational reform in England is itself a product of reform in infant and junior (i.e., primary) schools, with the most active reform emerging among teachers of younger children. Secondly, the proposal itself grew directly out of a class conducted by and for elementary school teachers, and it was conceived and developed by elementary school teachers. Recognizing this early childhood emphasis, the authors promised in a footnote that their Center would "endeavor to provide materials and consulting services for secondary and higher use where feasible." The proposal also recognized the wide variety in existing local teaching methods, therefore it promised not to subscribe only to 'open classroom' techniques but to encourage "thoughtful, child-centered teaching of many varieties."[14]

Finally the proposal was clearly a product of the Wilmington DVES elementary school, even though teachers from other schools had a hand in formulating it. The proposal was conceived at that school, designed by one of its teachers, approved by the Wilmington school board, and encouraged by the superintendent of the supervisory union to which Wilmington belonged. The Center was to be established at the DVES school; some schools in two adjacent supervisory unions joined through the initiative of teaching principals and teachers and because of geographical proximity to DVES. The superintendent of the other supervisory union most involved did not see the proposal until after it was funded.

In short, the proposed Center was a product of personal initiative among elementary school teachers focussed on one particular elementary school. This narrow orientation would at first prove a source of strength as the

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[14] The limited usefulness of British teacher centers to secondary teachers is noted briefly by Brand in Adams, In-Service Education, 147-8. On this general problem, see below, Chapter 4.

Center began to establish its program. Later it would become a restriction to institutional growth from which the Center would have to struggle free.

IV. Early Development of MTTC

On April 15, 1974, the proposal developed by Murrow and his colleagues received state approval. At this point MTTC consisted of a board, a design, a space, and a modest budget. A minority of teachers had given their support to existing plans but a large gap remained between the desires of that group and the attitudes of msot of their colleagues. MTTC would have to find ways of filling that gap.

This chapter discusses the ways in which the Center, consisting of its staff and primary supporters, defined and implemented its mission. The account will concentrate on analyzing the services and organizational structure formed to carry out those services. The development of the Center has been divided into five phases: a planning phase, extending from approval of the project in April 1974 to adoption of full program services in the Fall semester; an initial program phase based on proposal guidelines; an adjustment phase during which the Center sought to reconcile program assumptions to actual usage by intended beneficiaries; and an expansion phase, in which the Center was able to draw on its own experience and develop a distinctive institutional form. An adaptation phase emerged when the Center became separated from its initial support structure and had to develop new sources of support. The paper will describe this phase in outline. Since the Center, at the time of writing, was still in this critical phase the results were not in and the account could not be completed.

The schematization described above was suggested by the developmental process of MTTC; it accords with the sequence defined by Berman and McLaughlin in the Rand study of Federal Programs supporting educational change. The more

[1] See Berman, Paul and Milbrey W. McLaughlin, Federal Programs Supporting Educational Change, Vol. VIII: Implementary and Sustaining Innovations. Santa Monica, Calif., Rand, May 1978.

detailed sequence adopted here is intended to draw attention to the two processes of adjustment of program objectives to user responses, and adaptation to organizational changes. In the process of implementing its initial strategies, MTTC experienced a dislocation between its planned activities and user responses. Its continuation and growth depended on effective reaction to this problem. Such a development is not uncommon among educational innovations, but the issue of adjustment and the form that it takes seem sufficiently significant to warrant special attention, particularly in the case of institutions about whoce natural history little is as yet known.

The discussion of adaptation draws attention to the question of continuation. Generally continuation is defined in terms of ability to survive termination of external "start-up funding. However, as the Rand research points out, external funding is only one aspect of an organization's total support system, and other support structures may also be vital to continuation. Such structures need to be viewed in comparable focus and their relationship to project continuation understood. Ability to adapt to significant changes in support is an intrinsic aspect of organizational continuation, and this is the reason for giving it special attention.[2]

Planning Phase

During this phase the project had to acquire a director and staff, develop its program to reflect staff commitment, and develop the interest of teachers and others involved in local education. These two processes of program and constituency development took place simultaneously, so that by the time the planning phase was completed, the project had already taken significant steps to apply its proposed program.

The search for a director was carried out by a committee of teachers

[2] See Berman and McLaughlin, Federal Programs Supporting Educational Change, Vol. IV, The Findings in Review, Santa Monica, Calif., Rand, 1975., especially sections III and IV. According to Rand, "Our fieldwork clearly showed that project outcomes depended more on the characteristics of the project's setting than on any other factor." Vol. IV, p. 20.

appointed by the governing board and representing four local schools. The committee sought a person with educational interests comparable to those generated by Dupont and Murrow in modern British primary school reform, and with the organizational skills to apply those interests to rural educational needs. Over twenty candidates applied, many from urban settings and one of whom had run an urban teacher center. However the Committee soon narrowed its interest to Dorothy Schubert, principal of a participating school with broad experience in early childhood education. Schubert had already attended seminars in England on early childhood and open classroom curriculum, one organized by Vincent Rogers, another by John Coe, chief advisor for primary schools in Oxfordshire and a leading exponent of primary school reform.[3] She was able to demonstrate understanding of rural problems and commitment to child-centered education, and she was in a position to afford a limited salary, factors which eliminated most other candidates. Her appointment took effect in the middle of June.

Schubert in turn sought a part-time assistant director, capable of offering considerable time for limited compensation. The successful candidate, Nicki Steel, knew the local community and schools, had worked with older children and was competent in the arts and crafts skills actively employed in integrated curriculum teaching. Steel's appointment at the end of June completed the staffing of the new Center.

The Center's program began, even before the appointment of its staff, with a visit by John Coe in late April. Coe gave an address, attended by 80-90 parents and teachers, on the philosophy and practice of open classroom teaching. He discussed learning by doing, and spoke on the developmental stages of child learning. A second event, arranged provisionally by Murrow, called for two English primary school head teachers, recommended by Coe, to provide a summer workshop on crafts in

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[3] Coe had already been introduced to American educators through the writings of Vincent Rogers. See the latter's "Primary Education in England: An Interview with John Coe," Phi Delta Kappan, 52, 9, May 1971.

the curriculum.

After Schubert assumed direction, she proceeded to carry forward MTTC's commitment to child-centered education. The director's job description called only for knowledge of "new developments", but Schubert was selected for her interest in implementing them. Recalling this interest, Shubert told the writer,

> "From what I had seen in the British schools, and because of my personal experience, I had a strong feeling that schools can be very influential in the formation of the child's total personality, self confidence, self image, and competence with hands as well as brain. I was impressed with the all round development of children in the British schools which I had visited. So I came to the teacher center job with a mission, to help teachers look at the child's total development and whole life."

In effect Schubert aimed to promote not merely "open classroom" as such but rather recognition of the broad role that school plays in the development of every child and the need for cooperation among all adults involved. Her first priority was to open the Center, set up the room, and get it ready for teachers. A second priority was to help teachers open up their classrooms through providing learning materials and 'how-to' workshops. The workshop on crafts in the curriculum went ahead in August. Thirty-two participants, both teachers and parents, were introduced to expertly displayed samples of work by English children, based on the philosophy that arts and crafts should enter all areas of curriculum. The course included introductions to calligraphy, bookmaking, batik and simple pottery. It enabled participants both to get to know each other over a four day period and to practice applying crafts and activities to their teaching style. Two participants reported being impressed by the learning potential of crafts and activities and by the quality of work which the instructors expected of their children. Many also felt the course was too short to help teachers in applying specific activities to their general instructional goals.

By the opening of the school year MTTC had established itself as an attractive meeting place for teachers and one which would help to develop practical materials

and skills. An active minority of teachers and parents had visited the Center and participated in its activities. The Center had also exhibited signs of its future direction. It had given prominence to the philosophy and practice of open classroom learning, it was directed primarily toward early childhood elementary education, and its practical services were geared primarily to the needs of teachers. Such developments were implicit in the original proposal and were consistent with English teacher center practice which formed the primary model for MTTC.

Yet these developments involved some shift in direction from Murrow's proposal. The latter focuses on problems and services directly applicable to work in the classrooms. Schubert, however, at this time viewed the Center more as "standing apart and providing what people needed rather than going into the classroom, or alternatively leading workshops, providing experiences, materials and the companionship of colleagues with similar problems, and providing teaching that teachers needed." This vision of MTTC was in line with the prevailing centripetal model of the teacher center as a place to which teachers and other interested people came to acquire materials, skills, ideas and companionship.

Such a model would place initiative for using Center services in the hands of teachers and other users themselves. Elementary teachers and teaching principals aware of isolation and stagnation had already begun to mobilize around the Center. But two other teaching constituencies remained untouched - non-committed elementary teachers and virtually all high school teachers and principals. At the staff and school board level, one superintendent and two local school boards were behind the Center, but several other public school boards and one supervisory office remained to be cultivated. Thus mobilization of support remained a significant issue as the new school year approached.

Initial Program

On September 3 the new staff were invited to present their program to all 110 teachers of Windham Southwest Supervisory Union. A week later 50 people

attended a housewarming at the Center, and the program of meetings, workshops, and acquisition of materials got underway. For the next four months the staff tried to implement this program. At the end of that time, poor attendance at Center functions and logistical difficulties in distributing materials forced the staff and governing board into a major revision of program activities.

What happened to necessitate this change in direction? To begin with, the staff attempted to carry out an ambitious program on very modest resources. They put considerable time and effort into building up the Center itself. A library of educational books and materials was quickly assembled, all of which had to be organized and catalogued. Scrounge materials and live animals were accumulated. Steel and her father developed several learning games. A newsletter was produced, a xerox machine rented. The Center contracted to purchase MACOS films and rent special learning kits from the Hanover Museum Ongoing Venture in Education. Staff assumed the responsibility of obtaining these materials, distributing them to schools and maintaining an effective bookkeeping system. The value of such a program proved "inestimable," the logistics "often exasperating and time consuming."[4] Beyond all this resource mobilization, the staff found themselves constantly rearranging furniture as Center activities developed.

The Center also organized an active schedule of meetings, classes and workshops. Meetings included special sessions for teachers and parents studying Dreikurs videotapes, teachers interested in science curriculum, or reading disabilities, or early childhood education. Classes and workshops were arranged in a wide variety of subjects, most involving the application of crafts to classroom learning. Generally speaking meetings would draw ten to fifteen people, but attendance at workshops was spotty and sometimes negligible. This was particularly disappointing inasmuch as subjects were chosen at teacher request and quite often involved outside instructors,

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[4] Annual Report, MTTC, Wilmington, Vt., June 1975

for whom no compensation was available. Many workshops had been scheduled on evenings or Sundays, times outside regular staff hours but thought to be more accessible to teachers.

In effect the concept of the Center as an attractive, welcoming place, where teachers could meet informally and get to know each other, proved inadequate. "It transpired," said a strong supporter, "that people did not have time for that. It sounded like a great idea but it didn't pay off." Another active participant said, "The problem was we were all so busy. We would have liked to have had more part in teacher center activities but couldn't because of family responsibilities."[5]

These labors and disappointments forced the staff and board into a critical reappraisal of the Center's function. In a year-end summary of this thinking, Schubert wrote:

> Overall, by the end of December, it seemed obvious that the "workshops approach" was not the way to meet teachers' real needs; that coming to the Center, whether for a workshop (even one in which great interest had been expressed) or for coffee and conversation and/or materials was not yet an attractive possibility to very many teachers. They were just too tired after the school day to make the extra effort, or to go out of their way; or perhaps they felt too much like strangers as they approached another school, to consider whether it might be worthwhile.
>
> Placing ourselves in their position, we could not help seeing that we needed to re-think our basic premises on "delivery of services."[6]

In the state Title III evaluation, conducted in mid February, the staff had added some other, less diplomatic explanations. The report spoke of "considerable indifference, bordering occasionally on hostility (perhaps too strong a word)" among teachers adhering to traditional educational methods, in opposition to those of the Vermont design. "Our bias," admitted the report, "is probably more obvious than we

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5 In "Reflections on British Teachers' Centres" Taylor includes a section on 'the problem of release time.' This argues that dependence on voluntary teacher attendance at Center functions after school has conflicts with more basic sociological reasons for choosing teaching as a profession, a position which MTTC's early experience bears out. Taylor comments, "Centers can be added to that long list of capital assets so uneconomically utilized at present by the educational system." Devaney, Essays, 136-7.

6 Annual Report, 4.

realize." Staff also had trouble in crossing the secondary education barrier. Their bookkeeping system was timeconsuming and confusing. They experienced conflicting demands on their daily schedule. They were materially helped by the DVES affiliation but psychologically handicapped by identification with "that school that gets all the breaks."

Another set of difficulties arose with certain school boards, principals and superintendents. Staff reported that board recognition of the needs of teachers for support and continued in-service education seemed very rare. They encountered an educational philosophy, in some instances, "which is strongly opposed to ours." More generally, they experienced indifferent support, "rooted, we believe, in community attitudes toward 'modern' education." The report made a bow to the Windham Southwest superintendent, but both staff subsequently admitted to feeling inadequate support from that critical direction. The report warned, only too accurately, that (local) financial support would be very slow to come.[7]

Among all these difficulties certain generic problems stand out. The centripetal model developed by English teacher centers could not be easily applied in Vermont with its localized management of education and tradition of self-reliance. English centers were more favorably located in relation to schools and teachers, and many contented themselves with doing a limited number of things only two or three days a week and did not provide a library or materials like MTTC. In fact they might be empty a couple of days a week.

Thus the borrowed model, and the ambitiousness of the program proved a major source of MTTC's early difficulties. Yet the fledgling Center enjoyed some undoubted strengths. It had a core of interested teachers and a warm and stimulating setting. Its workshops and seminars had been of outstanding quality. It had developed

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[7] Vermont Dept. of Education, Division of Federal Programs, Title III, ESEA, MTTC, Deerfield Valley School, Wilmington, Vermont, On-site Team Report, Date of visit February 12-13, 1975.

valuable material resources, good relationships with nearby accrediting institutions, and "on the whole" sympathetic support from a superintendent and group of principals. Another major strength, not reported in this source, is that the Center quickly perceived its difficulties and took action to adjust its operating procedures.

Adjustment

During this phase, which completed the first year of operation, the Center adjusted its program to response by local users, and began laying plans for more comprehensive services. The process may be described as one of intelligent improvisation and evaluation. New behavior emerged both among staff and participating teachers, from which a sense of the Center's real usefulness to area schools emerged. This realism in turn enabled the Center to develop more systematic and long range strategies.

Improvisation: Realizing the inadequacies of a centripetal strategy, the staff began to carry out a program of visits to specific teachers in specific classes and schools. These staff visits were carried out as requested by teachers and were at first scheduled on a sporadic and ad hoc basis, due to lack of budgeted time for such an outreach activity. At first visits consisted primarily of bringing materials and objects or conducting student observations for teachers. Gradually the visiting policy developed into a communications system for spreading ideas and information and developing personal relationships between staff and teachers. Before the year was out the policy included arrangements for an entire class to visit another class or school.

In addition to staff outreach, arrangements were made to move certain programs into participating schools. Whole day workshops were conducted in schools in such topics as Right to Read, recreational planning, or the school media center. These workshops made use of professional staff days and some outside speakers and attracted as many as 40-45 participants. Another kind of outreach was achieved by arranging for teachers to take certain workshops outside the mountain towns area.

With regard to services sought by teachers, the Center moved away from the policy of ad hoc workshops and informal welcome and towards a more structured program. In early December the director arranged a meeting of area teachers interested in early childhood education. This meeting formed into an interest group, developed a program of topics and speakers, and scheduled meetings at participant schools and elsewhere. A participating teacher administered the program which continued through the school year. The group, sometimes numbering 17-18 persons, discussed a wide variety of subjects. Participants found that the meetings enabled them to become acquainted and stay in touch. The discussions, said one teacher, "were always interesting."

Another program which began to take form at this time consisted of provision of graduate credit courses. Through the aegis of the center Murrow and Dupont repeated their course on Open Education at a nearby high school. Anne Watt, a doctoral student at UMass who later succeeded Schubert as MTTC director, gave an eleven week course at the Center on Education of the Self. Half of the 16 participants were high school teachers, and the remainder included elementary teachers and parents. John Coe, accompanied by Charity James (a noted specialist on secondary education), returned to give a weekend workshop on 'Education Today and Tomorrow.' This event attracted 60 participants, 38 from outside the Mountain Towns area. A fourth course, attracting 36 participants, consisted of a repeat of the previous summer's workshop on 'Curriculum for the Informal Classroom.' These courses represented a ground-breaking approach to in-service education in a rural area with poor access to graduate school programs. Their significance was soon recognized. In the words of a governing board member, "they were able to bring a very diversified group of people together, teachers who came from different places and different levels of teaching. This is what gets ideas flowing." She added, "Let's face it, there is nothing in southern Vermont in the way of graduate level work. You can go to Keene or UMass, but MTTC is <u>the</u> facility in southern Vermont which has been providing (teachers) graduate level work."

Such programs provided MTTC with the incentive to improve cultivation of its constituencies. The graduate credit courses began to create an interest in the Center among high school teachers. Hitherto the attitude of secondary teachers had been at best indifferent, at worst envious or cynical. Because of its leaning towards early childhood and elementary education, MTTC appeared to have little to offer secondary school teachers beyond a few materials and use of the xerox copier. Center records for the first year show that only 3 out of 20 teachers in one high school visited the center frequently, and 11 never appeared at all. In another, nearer high school, interest in the center was only a little more active. Consequently the fact that secondary teachers enrolled in the graduate courses proved very important in breaking the high school barrier and in interesting secondary teachers in MTTC as a professional resource.

Another constituency, consisting of teachers and educational specialists outside the mountain towns area, developed with unexpected rapidity. Over 1,000 people from several states visited the Center during its first year, and outsiders dominated some of the course enrollments. Other schools and educational institutions showed an interest in affiliation with the Center, in particular one college with a strong program in informal classroom education.

Meanwhile, Center staff attempted to develop positive relations with district boards whose schools were serviced by the Center. Many teachers wrote letters of support to their boards, and during the spring staff made presentations to boards resulting in several token pledges of financial support. In other instances, reported Schubert, "Our request was given only scant attention and it was apparent many directors do not understand what we are trying to do and do not see its relevance to their function."[8] Several boards, at this time, were committed to financial retrenchment and took a suspicious attitude towards additional and unfamiliar expense items and individuals.

Evaluation: During its first year the Center undertook three formal reviews,

[8] Annual Report, 28.

in addition to numerous evaluations of specific activities. The Title III evaluation in February 1975 was carried out by two officials from the State Department of Education, a state advisory board member, and a state college project director. The team interviewed project staff, principals and teachers (nearly all of whom were active supporters of the Center) and a scattering of local citizens, parents, students and resource persons. The team did not interview any local district board members, and did not report interviewing central office staff. Perhaps because of this limitation, the team found "no significant discrepancies between the project staff's self evaluation and the on-site team's observations regarding objectives assessment." Even so the evaluation was able to identify a number of problems, some unanticipated, such as teachers' needs for accredited courses and meetings of interest groups. Mid year evaluation of these problems undoubtedly assisted the Center in adjusting its program to the interests of teachers.

At the end of the school year MTTC was visited by Ann Cook and Herb Mack, both noted consultants on informal classroom practice, for the purpose of reviewing programmatic options. Cook and Mack visited six participating schools and observed various classroom activities. Although encountering great variations in teaching style, they found that most classrooms visited had, to some degree, moved away from whole-class teaching. Teachers were aware of Center activities and exhibited a warmth towards the Center. Participants in the early childhood meetings had welcomed the chance "to break through the normal isolation faced by a classroom teacher"; even at the high school level beginnings had been made. Mack and Cook concluded, optimistically, that the problem of attracting the initial clientele seemed to have been solved. They also warned that "head teachers" had to be tolerant, if not supportive, for Center work to be effective.[9]

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[9]This evaluation was published as an attachment to Schubert's first Annual Report.

This review was followed by a comprehensive self-evaluation written by Schubert. This document surveyed all activities in detail and drew specific programmatic conclusions. Reviewing the function and emerging character of the Center, Schubert argued that its greatest usefulness would "probably always be in its service to elementary teachers." Because of staff limitations and secondary level preoccupations, high school teachers found less that appealed to them. Yet the Center was able to function in different schools, across school districts and state lines. It had reached out to visitors from outside the area who had contributed new ideas and support. It had served all community groups interested in education. Lack of participation in Schubert's view had appeared as much a function of ideology as geography. The Center now knew that its job "was not just to get up a program but to find out what people really wanted and needed," also to foster materials and practices "which the best research recommends." Schubert stressed that the Center must be something that teachers want and value, and that administrators, directors and the community in general must be included in its program and planning. Financially, she warned, "We need help!!"

This emerging sense of its real strengths and weaknesses enabled the Center staff and governing board to begin planning ahead. A need was seen for longer-range plans for curriculum day events, a more comprehensive approach to graduate education, and greater outreach into the general community. The Center began planning a community lecture series, set up a committee to seek funds and plan a public relations program, and began administrative negotiations with continuing education deans. Interest groups planned meetings for the following year. As these activities indicate, the Center had begun to perceive a future, and this perception had spread beyond its immediate leaders.

Expansion

Armed with advance planning, renewed funding and a growing sense of mission, MTTC was able in its second year to move into a more ambitious and expanded program. Two aspects of this process deserve particular attention. The relationships between individuals and institutions developed on a lateral rather than vertical basis. Most local boards and superintendents remained indifferent to the Center. Secondly, the Center became more overtly identified with its staff and facilities. Teachers who had initiated the Center now shifted towards becoming beneficiaries and consumers of Center initiatives. The role of teachers as initiators did not disappear, but it was channelled into certain functions and away from others.

Relationships: The Center's relationships expanded considerably during this phase, not only with local teachers but with agencies and individuals well beyond the Mountain Towns area. Several programs helped to shape these relationships, of which the school visits and the graduate courses were the most important. Through these programs the Center developed significant linkage and brokerage functions.

The school visit program developed as a way of bringing Center staff and services to teachers. Outreach remained the primary objective. Center staff developed a plan of visiting each school twice a month. Visits were scheduled well in advance and publicised through the newsletter and through direct communication by school representatives on the governing board. Much of the staff activity still consisted of delivering materials and responding to curriculum needs requested by individual teachers. However staff also developed several extended projects in conjunction with a few teachers and classes.

Another significant function which the staff developed was to provide the connecting links for the exchange of ideas and information about activities

going on in other schools and classes. This linkage service was particularly useful to early childhood teachers who depended heavily on ideas rather than on structured curriculum. A third important function was that staff could supply additional teaching skills; and this was useful to teachers in several aspects of the curriculum. Steel's abilities in arts and crafts were especially called upon, and she was able to apply these skills with students in a variety of subject areas and physical locations.

The school visit program developed within certain constraints. Staff entree to schools was achieved primarily through informal relationships with individual teachers, not through formal and mutual arrangements between MTTC and school principals. Classroom visits tended to be limited to elementary school teachers who requested them. School visits were made regularly even when no requests had been made in advance, and entree to classroom s tended to remain informal. Some teachers could not handle that informality, while others regarded staff visiting activities as a frill. Tolerance for help in arts and crafts reflected this attitude; Steel's abilities in mathematics were seldom utilized. Staff had many other activities to perform, and Schubert was unable to give extensive time to visits, despite emphasis on this activity in the director's original job description. In short, the school visits functioned between individuals and did not yet become institutionalized around the Center and the schools. It was most effective in combatting isolation and fulfilling teacher requests, and it attracted some more teachers towards other Center activities.

The program of graduate courses was more effective in achieving these results. The isolation of the area from institutions granting graduate credit severely limited teachers seeking improvement of professional skills or credentials.

The Center was able not only to supply credit-granting courses, but to develop a consortium relationship with four colleges and a university whereby credit could be applied at any of those institutions. By the end of the second year this consortium was in process of taking effect. The strength of the program lay not only in its administrative arrangements but in its educational impact. It appealed to high school teachers, and it drew participants from well beyond the Mountain Towns area. Mountain Towns teachers were also able to participate in some college programs, including a field trip to England. A Center committee helped to develop courses which attracted the interest of parents and community members as well as teachers. One course gave birth to a study group which was still meeting two years later.

The success of this program was soon reflected in evaluations. The second Title III evaluation called it "perhaps (the Center's) most innovative approach." In her year-end report on the need for credit courses Schubert declared, "In one sense, the heart of our program is to fill this need." A teacher described it as the most important facet of the work of the Center. Admittedly the choice of courses reflected the Center's focus on methodology and did not draw teachers oriented to content; nor were courses successful in drawing school district board members, despite efforts to interest this constituency. And when courses carried credit from only one institution some teachers stayed away because they had no previous relationship with that institution. The managerial complexities of organizing courses made the program heavily dependent on staff initiative and the availability of instructors. Unlike workshops, courses and credits could not be arranged at short notice or on the basis of spontaneous initiative,since credit arrangements and syllabus requirements differed among the participating colleges and university. Thus the very attractiveness of the program made it a significant factor in differentiating Center staff and teacher relationships, and in institutionalizing the work of Center staff as a management activity.

Beyond these primary services to teachers MTTC also developed relationships with parent teacher groups, local social service agencies and state-wide agencies and government services. Parent-teacher groups used the Center for planned meetings and worked with staff on Center projects. Community members began serving on the governing board and committees. For agencies the Center provided a meeting place and cooperated on agency projects. For teachers it investigated state educational services and arranged for several model teachers to visit area schools. It acted as host to a Vermont Education Association meeting (normally held in Burlington), at which a local teacher led a workshop.

These activities served the original objective of improving school-community relations. Their effect was mainly to draw community members and agencies towards teacher activities, as represented by the Center; they did not yet function to draw teachers into the community. Thus they continued to reflect the centripetal "here we are, come visit us" concept. The more dynamic centrifugal approach (much harder to project) would come later.

Management: During this phase management tasks expanded to meet the demands of effective program delivery. Despite an increase in the time of the assistant director and provision of skeletal secretarial services, staff time remained very limited and had to be divided between administration and program delivery. A division of labor emerged based on the skills of the two directors. Schubert wrote the newsletter, evaluations and correspondence, provided bookkeeping and secretarial services, developed contacts with colleges, agencies and organizations, worked with Center committees, promoted early childhood projects and undertook some school visiting. Steel undertook most of the school visits, taught a course, directed several arts and crafts projects, assembled catalogued and distributed materials and displays, worked with older elementary and secondary students, and accompanied teachers and students on field trips.

This arrangement made Center-based activities the responsibility of the director and field activities the responsibility of the assistant director. While field activities were at least controlled by schedules, Center administrative tasks were not. Before the second year was out Schubert felt the director's job imposing too great a burden and announced her resignation.

Some of the problems relating to organization and management were identified by the second Title III report. It noted that despite specific strategies and deadlines the project was not following a planned program to the extent it could be. More publicity was needed, staff needed to go to more service groups and use the community to a greater extent. But the report agreed that the director's time was divided realistically among her responsibilities, that working relationships between principals, staff and superintendent were good, that more work was being done to obtain financial support, and that plans for continuation were beginning to be realistic. Schubert's own views on these matters were more circumscribed. She stated that working relationships with some administrative officers were only fair, due to "suspicion of our purpose and/or competence." She feared that staff were spreading themselves too thin, that no possibility existed locally of more than "token" financial support. She said that reaching people remained difficult because of fear of change or identification of the Center with an educational philosophy "they do not understand/approve." Many, she reported, "<u>want</u> to be insular," and would tell staff they were "getting on alright as they are."

Were these discrepancies in evaluation the inevitable result of the limited perception of visitors seeking to promote a good thing? Or was the nature and conception of the program in fact giving rise to an unwieldly managerial task? Or were changing conditions in schools and communities causing an increase in staff work load? It appears that all these factors were at work.

Title III team members were still unable to meet with local school board directors and therefore appraise the context as a whole. The conception of the program did call for a heavy investment in staff time, to educate the community as well as teachers to the potential of a novel enterprise. Local conditions were indeed changing. Two schools had been subjected to drastic budget cuts, and demands for the basics were resurfacing along with more testing and grading as tools of accountability. In this context, reported Schubert, innovation and change were themselves unwelcome and the Center suspect as an unnecessary frill. And yet she felt that teachers needed its services more than ever.

With all these pressures at work, it is not surprising that managerial tasks increased, or that they enforced a division of labor which tied the director to administrative and clerical tasks. In the process, direction of the Center became more of an administrative than educational function. Schubert managed to distribute the administrative load in part by forming Center committees to work on courses, fundraising and lecture series, and by inviting community members to serve on those committees. It would remain for her successor to develop a new balance between educational and administrative responsibilities.

Usage: Teacher usage of MTTC services increased during this period, as did usage by other constituencies both within and outside the immediate service area. But the pattern of teacher usage requires clarification. Early childhood teachers continued to use the Center most consistently and frequently. Elementary school teachers as a whole used it on an individual rather than faculty-wide basis. Secondary school teachers used it principally for courses. The Center (as reported by teachers) began adapting to these patterns. Staff visited teachers who wanted visits, and the Center dealt with the needs of teachers who expressed needs. Conversely it attracted strong teachers because it needed strong teachers to serve on the governing board or to communicate

with local schools.

What was behind these usage patterns, and what were their implications for MTTC's development? Many factors contributed to the strong involvement of early childhood teachers. Schubert herself had considerable experience in this field through work in kindergarten and Headstart projects. Early childhood teachers were active in forming the Center; day care centers and kindergartens provided the Center's main non-public school affiliation. The Murrows were strong advocates of this field and Liza Murrow had founded a local nursery school. Early childhood teachers in public schools were less subject than other teachers to curriculum requirements or institutional supervision, and more needy of resources and affiliations. The tasks of substitute parenting and child-development made early childhood teachers more involved in children's total needs, while the possibilities opened up by modern learning theory were a stimulus to exchange of ideas and information. More generally, the teacher center, as an organization, drew its institutional form and inspiration from the priorities of early childhood education. Certainly there was a clear relationship in the English setting between those priorities and the formation of teacher centers, which influenced the development of MTTC. From the persistence of the early childhood orientation through the first two years, it appears that MTTC transplanted that model quite successfully.

The wide variation in usage of Center services by elementary teachers as a whole is not so easily accounted for. It appears to reflect wide differences in role definition, amplified by differences in teaching goals between standard teacher-training programs and teacher center services. Older teachers related to the Center in the same way as high school teachers. They used it intermittently for courses and materials, but not for the objectives intended by its originators. This attitude reflected a long-standing orientation of school curricula and teaching practice toward higher level criteria, based on the view that "the child is not educated for himself or family but for society

and the state."[10] The Vermont Design of 1968 had attempted to reverse this attitude by arguing that "education is a process conceived to benefit the learner." "The teacher must not dictate a particular set of values." "We must develop personalized ways of assessing an individual's progress."[11] Within the state this "student-centered" approach, institutionalized by teacher center proponents, represented a partisan rather than a consensus viewpoint. Resistance to this viewpoint occurred at all levels of the educational spectrum. Local elementary teachers who regarded MTTC as a frill were thus not simply rejecting a novel enterprise from an individual or local basis but reflecting a larger debate within the state (and national) educational spectrum.[12]

Educational background and training of individual teachers was and is another significant variable. Graduates of colleges and universities with training programs connected to innovative schools and programs have tended to be strong supporters of the Center. Another variable is based on identification with peer support groups defined by individual criteria such as age, provenance and motivation, and not by school affiliation. Such a group of younger immigrant elementary teachers had formed in the five years preceding the foundation of the Center, in part to combat the professional isolation of small schools with small staffs often highly disparate in experience and goals. As a member

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[10] Mason S. Stone, The 39th Vermont School Report, Bellows Falls, Vermont, Gobie Press, 1906, 7. "Accepting the principle that the child is educated forsociety and the State, then there is no logical stopping place below a college education." Ibid, 15. The Carnegie Foundation Report of 1914 regretted that "the domination of the college...has had an undue effect...even in the elementary schools." A Study of Education in Vermont, 91. Examinations for free admission to secondary school were instituted in 1906. See Stone, History of Education, 231.

[11] Vermont Design, paragraphs 1, 11, 12, in Nyquist and Hawes, Open Education, Chapter 5.

[12] A more detailed analysis of these attitudes and others discussed below would be highly pertinent to assessment of institutional innovation, but was beyond the scope of the present study.

of this group, Steel had been able to make good use of it in gaining entree to local schools.

Yet another more basic variable concerns the relationship between life and career goals. Most younger teachers interviewed had become acquainted with Vermont through its recreational life and had moved to the state out of attraction to its life style. Very few teachers interviewed said that they moved to the state out of an existing professional interest in rural education. In short, life style was the primary factor affecting employment conditions. Employment was obtained on an availability basis, sometimes involving unfamiliar grade levels and long commuting journeys. Employment conditions for such teachers who had placed career second to life style were liable to be inconvenient; MTTC offered a corrective to this problem.

A related variable concerns motivation towards teaching as an occupation. Some original supporters of the Center subsequently left the teaching profession and in some cases, the area. Several supporters of the Center commented that elementary teachers who did not use the Center were either teaching as a "job" or had long since been drained by the problems of teaching in a rural area. Finally, the style and scope of Center activity were a factor in involving elementary teachers. Several teachers were originally lukewarm towards the Center because they perceived it only as "a nice little extra." Only after the Center developed active outreach policies did its significance as a communications link and advisory service become apparent to these teachers.

In the case of secondary school teachers, usage of the Center was influenced by teacher perceptions of Center objectives in relation to their own educational functions. The Center's orientation towards early childhood and elementary education, and its location in the major local elementary school, were undoubtedly an obstacle. But the more basic objection arose over perceived

differences in elementary and secondary education, centering on the often quoted cliche that one group teaches children and the other subjects.

A high school teacher, interviewed on this question, thought that institutional arrangements caused the distinction. The high school teacher would see 50-100 children a day "at 50 minutes a clip"; the elementary teacher could develop an in-depth relationship with a child. In such a relationship, based on "content relatively simple to the adult mind", methodology and technique became of comparatively greater concern. MTTC's services addressed these concerns. High school teachers, by contrast, had to be concerned with content and with issues of adolescent behavior and identity. These issues were beyond the scope of the Center, at least in its formative phases. In due course the Center began to get at these issues through courses, but other more classroom-oriented services remained extensions of elementary school needs. To be sure, the same issues of career identity which inhibited usage of the Center by elementary teachers applied to high school teachers. However, the internal sturcture and management of secondary education imposed a less variable impediment to usage of the type of services offered by MTTC. In this respect, indifferent usage of MTTC services by local high school teachers is consistent with findings in general studies of high school receptiveness to innovation.[13]

Adaptation

In this phase MTTC adapted to significant changes within its own structure and in the educational environment which it served. It developed several services

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[13] e.g. Berman and McLaughlin, Federal Programs...Vol. IV, 21; James, Charity, Young Lives at Stake, London, Collins, 1968, excerpted in Silberman, Charles E., The Open Classroom Reader, New York, Vintage, 1973; Charity James, Beyond Customs, New York, Agathon, 1974. Brand, discussing usage of teacher centers in England, reports the same symptoms. See Adams, In-service Education, 148.

reflecting a growing interest locally and nationwide in in service education. Relations with local administrators and school boards developed considerably. The Center became active in the teacher center network coordinated by the Teachers' Centers Exchange and hosted a nationwide conference for rural teacher center personnel. Four years of Federal funding came to an end, precipitating a crisis from which the Center was (at the time of writing) just beginning to emerge. The proximity of these events, and the present writer's relationship with the second director, prevent detailed analysis. But certain aspects will be reviewed which bear on the issue of adaptibility.

Institutional Relations: At the end of September 1976 Schubert's resignation took effect. The MTTC board had by then instituted a search process. After interviewing several candidates, it offered the directorship to Anne Watt, who accepted the position. Watt was a doctoral candidate in humanistic education at the University of Massachusetts. She had had experience at all levels of education as nursery school administrator, elementary and secondary teacher, instructor in education at a state college and as staff development consultant. She was a local resident who had worked at DVES and Wilmington High School, and she had taught three courses for MTTC. Thus she was known to local teachers and community members and could capitalize on these relationships in assuming direction of the Center.

Watt's appointment coincided with a significant turnover in teaching and administrative staff. DVES acquired a new principal to replace Dupont, who became a superintendent in Connecticut. A new superintendent, Ralph McLean, was appointed to Windham Southwest Supervisory Union, and another would soon succeed to Windham Central, the other major participating union. Among teachers, Murrow had resigned from DVES while still remaining in the area, but several other early supporters had left the area and/or the profession. This turnover in leading personnel meant that the Center's formal relationships, never

particularly strong, were now once again an unknown quantity. The new director would be called on to establish working relationships with individuals who were new to their own positions as well as to the direction and purposes of the Center.

During her first year as director Watt had two priorities: one, to develop formal relations with district boards and administrative staffs; the second, to develop existing program services into an integrated in service strategy. The first priority was dictated by the life cycle of the Center, which was now in its third year of operation and still without any substantive commitment from local financial sources. The director and assistant director visited every school board, explained the Center's contribution to local education and proposed a modest per-student formula for assessing board financial commitments. Under this formula board contributions would amount to approximately 1/10 of the Center's total budget. The Center planned to raise other funds through offering more graduate courses on a basis which financed administration of that program. It had a fundraising committee to promote local contributions; it obtained a grant from a state agency to underwrite a community lecture series, and it obtained funds from CETA to finance appointment of a secretary bookkeeper and appointment of a staff assistant. All these activities and courses contributed materially but left the substance of the budget, consisting of the two directors' salaries and travel expenses, untouched. Fortunately the state department soon indicated an openness to providing a fourth year of Title IVc support to enable the Center to become eligible for consideration under the newly authorized Federal Teacher Center program.

In addition to these budgetary efforts MTTC had to redevelop its working relationships with participating schools and supervisory administrations. After

Watt assumed direction of the Center, some teachers and teaching principals who had been active on the Center's governing board assumed a lower profile or had themselves replaced by other teachers. Board membership by now was functioning partly on the basis of personal support, partly on the basis of school representation, with the latter not necessarily including the former. In short, informal relationships to Center management were beginning to give way to formal. Watt's approach to the issue of institutional relations was to visit each school in turn, meet with each principal and as many of the staff as possible, and begin the process of relating Center services to whole staffs rather than just to active individuals. This policy was advanced in the name of staff development which was and is one of Watt's primary interests. A few schools were responsive to this approach, and one or two principals began making broad institutional use of specific Center services. Some principals also began to make requests for personal support and to participate in the Center's expanding program of graduate courses.

A corresponding formalization took place in MTTC's internal management through the development of by-laws and the establishment of an executive committee for the governing board. Given the degree of managerial development that had already taken place in Center and staff functions, these initiatives served to recreate leadership roles for teachers within an institutional structure. Since they took effect only during the Center's fourth year of existence, the full force of this new leadership began to emerge only after the termination of the Title IVc funding on which year-round staff direction had depended.

The development of working relationships with supervisory administrations became another urgent priority. After one year, the latter part of it interrupted by injury from an accident, Watt and Superintendent McLean were able to develop a formal working relationship between the Center and Windham Southwest

Supervisory Union covering both educational policy and financial management. This relationship would prove critical to the Center's future after Title IVc funding ran out. The relationship with Windham Central Supervisory Union, never clearly formulated from the outset of the Center, proved harder to evolve because of lack of horizontal frameworks on which to hang such a relationship. After a good deal of unresolved negotiation Windham Central developed plans for a subsidiary teacher center, which at the time of writing have not yet materialized. Consequently, teachers at schools within that union which have had close ties to MTTC retained those ties. The third union in Massachusetts, with only one participating school, never developed close administrative relationships with the Center but drew on Center staff for specific services.

Some changes also took place in the relationships between MTTC and state educational offices. The official who had supervised the state Title III and IVc projects since the inception of the Center resigned in June 1977. Subsequently the state Department of Education reorganized personnel to take account of changes in Federal program funding caused by the development of the recent teacher center legislation. These transitions interrupted working relations between local administrators, including Center staff, and the state Department of Education. The distance between the state capital and local jurisdictions in south central Vermont added a complicating factor. This distance is not merely geographical; all of southern Vermont tends to feel institutionally distant from what is locally known as the "Montpelier-Burlington axis." Although definition of that distance is beyond the scope of this paper, its existence has impact on the issues of proximity and diffusion affecting the evolution of institutional innovations such as the teacher center.[14]

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[14]This perception has benefited from studies of network theory applied to educational innovation, among them Berry, Brian J. L., "Geographic Theories of Educational Development: Innovation Diffusion Within Informal Interpersonal Networks", February 1977; also Kadushin, Charles, "On the Problem of Formalizing Emergent Networks Among Innovators in Education." Both papers were developed for NIE. The issues raised by these studies will be looked at further in the next chapter.

Inservice education: As with its institutional relations, the Center's program services took on broader definition and more formal structure. Inservice education became the objective for Center programming, and staff development its most specific component. The graduate education program was expanded to include seven courses per year on locally requested curricular and administrative topics. More use was made of local instructors and educational specialists from the University of Massachusetts and other regional colleges. An adult education program was initiated in which all classes were offered by local high school teachers and community members.

In the school visitation program, Center staff moved away from the early emphasis on provision of materials and special skills towards an ongoing integration of staff development and curriculum development. This involved working on a follow-up basis with individual teachers who had taken Center courses and were applying new interests and skills in the classroom. Center staff offered to work with teachers on a school-wide basis to discuss problems or demonstrate teaching techniques. In one case the entire staff worked with a teacher in developing and applying a new curriculum project; in another Watt and Murrow worked with a whole school faculty faced with the task of teaching a new curriculum on a school-wide basis.

This development of an in service strategy occurred at a time when funding for inservice education was developed at a fast pace nationally and new approaches were beginning to appear across the country. Because of its novelty few local school board directors understood the meaning of the term or accepted its premises. Nevertheless MTTC was able to hook in to the fledgling in service network developed by the Teachers' Centers Exchange and to develop a distinctive role within that network.[15] MTTC's most important contribution was to host a

[15]The Teachers' Centers Exchange is housed at the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development and is funded by NIE as a national information and resource center.

summer workparty attended by representatives of rural teacher centers across the country. MTTC staff attended conferences outside Vermont and served as consultants to other states interested in developing rural in service programs.

Thus during this period MTTC was able to play a significant part in evolving the teacher center from an innovative program reflecting a particular philosophy toward one responsive to needs and interests of all levels and types of teachers. To say this is not to deny the broad significance of open education or to claim that use of the Center expanded dramatically. This responsive approach to all types and levels of teacher needs was essential in so small a population area to prevent the Center from evolving into a small club of like-minded teachers. The approach showed that teacher-centered in service education could take a professional as well as administrative form and that the former enjoyed more likelihood of serving the needs of teachers. Through such responsive programming teacher centers such as MTTC have helped to identify teachers' classroom needs and to develop programming based on the individual teacher's personal and professional goals.

V. Issues Affecting the Emergence of MTTC

Previous chapters have examined MTTC's relationship to a tradition of cultural and organizational innovation which became particularly active in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Within this tradition MTTC emerged as an extension of a search for 'better education' and a commitment to modernized open plan schools as a means of furthering that search. From another viewpoint MTTC emerged as a response to the long-standing problem in Vermont of teacher isolation. Thus it represented an intersection of two distinct but related motivations, one the search by communities for 'better education', the other the search by teachers for greater colleagueship. This chapter will review these trends and their relationship to the problems which MTTC encountered as it

developed organizationally.

Educational Setting

The Rand studies of Federal Programs supporting educational change found that "an innovation's local institutional setting has the major influence on its prospects for effective implementation." The Rand studies concluded that project outcomes depended more on the characteristics of the project's setting than on any other factor. Although this statement was later qualified to read that "a receptive institutional setting is a necessary but not sufficient condition for effective implementation," Rand held to the primacy of the local institutional setting for influencing project outcomes and continuation. It defined organizational climate and leadership, school and teacher characteristics, and district management capacity and support, as the primary components in that setting.[1]

In the present essay the definition of setting has been expanded to include the cultural context in which the local educational system has functioned. The essay has argued that local education has been heavily influenced by social and economic changes and has proved itself unexpectedly responsive to them. Indeed, the local and state educational setting was not merely "receptive" to innovation but substantially committed to it well before MTTC came into being. MTTC represented a natural extension of that commitment, and was in fact designed to help previous commitments take effect.

Many of the needs and strategies identified by MTTC innovators were not in fact new to Vermont education. The Carnegie Foundation report of 1914 drew attention to the isolation of elementary school teachers, as well as their youth, inexperience, lack of direction, rapid turnover, and limited connection to the communities where they taught. But the report praised the

[1]Berman and McLaughlin, Vol. IV, 20, 23; Vol. VIII, 30-34.

the native ability and sensitivity of teachers in the two hundred elementary schools visited by the Carnegie investigator. "It has been pathetic," said the report, "to see the eagerness with which the rural school teacher reaches out for educational help.... One's respect for the rural school deepen(s) when one sees the devotion, the energy, and oftentimes the great natural teaching ability that are displayed by a rural elementary school teacher."[2] The difference between the prospects for help available to elementary teachers in 1914 and their successors sixty years later tells a great deal about the changes that had occurred in Vermont's rural society, and the significance of its state and local commitments to educational innovation, particularly during the 1960s.

Is the setting in and around Wilmington sufficiently unique to lack applicability to rural educational conditions in other parts of the state or elsewhere in rural America? Certainly the growing spatial and cultural proximity of south central Vermont to the east coast megapolis has imposed special demands on its educational system requiring special responses. But the responses developed in south central Vermont are not unique to that area. There are other teacher centers and other open classroom and innovative schools elsewhere in the state. Although MTTC took an early lead in the rural teacher center movement, commitment to innovation in rural education has been much more widespread and was actively fostered by the state Department of Education for years before MTTC came into being. Similarly the social and economic changes occurring in southern Vermont differ in speed and intensity more than in substance from those occurring elsewhere in the state. The decline of traditional farming and its replacement by industrial and recreational developments tied to regional or national economic systems has occurred throughout the state. Vermonters receive the same information systems and employ the

[2] A Study of Education in Vermont, 10, 42-43, 46.

same technology that is to be found throughout contemporary America.[3] Southern Vermont may simply have taken a lead in experiencing the impact of those systems on its traditional culture and in recognizing the necessity for institutional responses. In this respect the responses within its educational system were paralleled by responses throughout its institutional structures.

The immediate questions raised by the Rand findings apply to specific aspects of an educational setting. These findings draw particular attention to the importance of the principal to the outcome of innovative projects, as well as the importance of teacher attitudes about their own professional competence and the centrality of the project to the district's educational priorities. How do these findings apply to the institutional setting under discussion here?

In the Rand studies the importance of the principal lies in giving moral support to the staff and in "creating an organizational climate that gives the project 'legitimacy'". Projects having the active support of the principal were the most likely to do well; when teachers thought a principal disliked a project, researchers rarely found favorable outcomes.[4] Other sources attribute similar importance to the role of the principal. Klopf, in a study of staff development, wrote that "the responsibility for the movement of a school with all its complexities towards achieving its goals, objectives, and programs belongs to the principal." A study of British primary education also argued that "the dominating influence in every school is that of the head teacher." A British teacher center warden emphasized the important contribution of the head teacher to the success or failure of teacher center activities.[5]

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[3] A recent study emphasizing the technological modernization of Vermont and its relationship to political change is Bryan, Frank M., Yankee Politics in Rural Vermont, Hanover, N.H., University Press of New England, 1974. See especially Chapter 6.

[4] Berman and McLaughlin, Vol. VIII, 30-31.

[5] Klopf, Gordon J., The Principal and Staff Development in the Elementary School, New York, Bank St. College of Education, 1974, 2; Blackie, John, Inside the Primary School, London, H.M. Stationery Office, 1967, 42. Adams, Elizabeth, In-Service Education, 147, 148.

In the case under study here, the climate of innovation developed in Wilmington during the 1960s had been the work of the superintendents and the local school board, with the principal playing a supportive role. After the establishment of DVES and the appointment of a principal interested in promoting open education, the climate of initiative focused on that school and on the leadership provided by Dupont. Certainly Dupont provided exactly the organizational climate necessary to give legitimacy to a project geared towards open education innovation; thus it is probably safe to conclude that without Dupont's active support MTTC could not have been established. In the case of other participating schools, the support of the principal was not a prerequisite to school and teacher participation, but active leadership by principals encouraged teachers or school boards (or in a few cases both) to develop an interest in the Center. Disinterest from principals could only be discounted where strong support existed among teachers as a group.

The importance of teacher attitudes about their own professional competence can also be confirmed by this study. We have pointed out similarities in the conditions faced by contemporary teachers and those studied by the Carnegie Foundation in 1913-14. One very important difference lies in the professional training received by elementary school teachers. The Carnegie report declared that "the typical rural school teacher...is a graduate of a four year high school, but has had no professional training."[6] Local teachers in Wilmington in the 1920s and 30s included graduates of two year normal schools, but a six week course following high school qualified a person to teach grades 1-8, and several teachers were hired on that basis.

Since that time the degree of professional training demanded of teachers has changed radically and is now the same for elementary as for high school teachers. In short, professionalization of elementary and early childhood teaching has drawn level with secondary school teaching. At the same time

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[6] A Study of Education in Vermont, 42. Elsewhere it argued that "The fact...that a large majority of the elementary school teachers have had no professional training ...makes the learning of lessons from books the predominant method of teaching." Ibid, 49.

developments in learning theory, as well as in the organization and funding of innovations in elementary teaching, have made teachers much more aware of the social expectations now placed on elementary school teaching. Thus changing social expectations and institutional policies have transformed the basis for assessing competence of elementary teachers. Graduates with professional degrees placed in isolated yet modernized and open plan schools have both a need and a basis, lacking to their forebears, for seeking support through professional expectations, particularly among teachers looking for help with curriculum development.

Finally a question arises regarding the centrality of the project to district educational and political priorities. Here again the establishment of MTTC was made possible by the existence of a well-established tradition in Wilmington of commitment to innovation, especially in early childhood education. This tradition had wide support within the community and had been actively promoted by the local board and supervisory administrators. Thus the issue of centrality applied less to MTTC's establishment than to its development and continuity. Given the policies and circumstances of the early 1970s, the establishment of MTTC was a natural projection of both local and statewide educational priorities.

MTTC as an Organizational Response

In arguing the case for creating a teacher center Murrow and his colleagues identified several categories of educational isolation. The most immediately observable - although not necessarily the most influential - is the physical and geographic isolation of small communities and schools, locked in by mountains and winter weather from the flow of activities and people in more densely populated and interconnected areas. Second, there is the cultural isolation experienced by teachers who feel they do not belong to

local communities and who often do not live in them. Third, some teachers feel professionally isolated from educational services in larger towns, or professionally isolated from colleagues performing similar functions in other schools. Fourth, teachers experience institutional isolation, derived from a non-collegial tradition especially pronounced in elementary education. This form of isolation acts to prevent exchange of ideas within individual schools; some teachers simply did not meet other teachers, while others experienced perfunctory meetings, limited to discussion of routine business. Finally there is the occupational isolation caused by contemporary mobility and transiency and affecting both teachers and students. Although unemployment and recession may be reducing this phenomenon, other processes such as technological growth and bureaucratization of work tend to reinforce it.

Some of these circumstances, although by no means all of them, were identified in the Carnegie study of 1913-14. At that time little could be or was done to mitigate the isolation experienced especially by elementary teachers. Can one point to any local initiatives between then and now which explicitly counteracted these circumstances?[7] For the 1930s a Wilmington informant reported that the then "tie-in" for teachers in the rural common schools was provided by the superintendent. He visited each school four or five times a year, and parents also "were good about visiting the school" where she taught. The teachers also met at the village school after school hours "to discuss matters of concern." In a certain sense the village school came to act as a teacher center; however the interaction among educators was ad-

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[7] This general question, and many others germane to this study, is raised by Dan C. Lortie in his paper "Networks and Organizational Rationality in American Public Schools" prepared for NIE's Group on School Capacity in Problem Solving.

ministrative and institutional rather than colleaguial and professional.[8]

For the 1950s several sources mentioned the work of regionally based 'state helping' teachers who gave workshops every summer where teachers could brush up on subject matter and methods. However, these individuals could provide evaluative reports and thus belonged to the supervisory structure. By this time the common schools were gone; elementary teachers had consolidated with each other and with secondary teachers. Again the association is institutional and instructional. Staff would get together to discuss regulations, upcoming events, and disciplinary or learning disability problems affecting specific students. No sources reported feeling any pronounced change in the social conditions around them.

In the 1960s this perception would alter dramatically. Many sources were aware of the social and economic changes and their impact on education. For one thing classes were increasing in size and filling with students from other states and unfamiliar cultures. Teachers went regularly to the annual Vermont Education Association meeting in Burlington and would come back with new books that they wanted. But according to one source, "It was books, not ideas." In any case, turnover in teachers at this time was considerable. Significant responses to social change came from ongoing administrators, board members, and parent groups through whose efforts the kindergartens, counselling services and new schools were initiated.

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[8] Changes and reversions in organization of supervisory unions between 1906 and 1923 reflected uncertainty about the effective role of the district superintendent. See Stone, History of Education, State of Vermont, 72-75. In the late 1930s the State strengthened the role of superintendents by requiring that they be college graduates with a minimum of 24 hours of professional experience and five years of secondary school teaching experience. "This forced 'the lot of Superintendents who were farmers' wives' out of the superintendencies that they held and contributed to the increased professionalization of Vermont schools." True and Cyronak, Vermont State Department of Education, 33-34.

By the end of the 60s, however, there is evidence of interest groups forming spontaneously among teachers both within existing schools and around separate schools of similar educational level. In the latter case the teachers involved were young, out of state and relatively new to teaching. As described by one participant, they "sort of knew each other" and tended to "hang around" together. Occasionally they would get together and play bridge or have a Christmas party. The relationship was as yet non-professional, but it manifested the lateral connecting that would characterize the development of MTTC. Within a few years a much more deliberate form of association would take place with the formation of local chapters of the Vermont Education Association in four larger school districts in Windham Southwest Supervisory Union. These chapters instituted collective bargaining to improve teacher compensation and terms of service. Teacher attitudes towards unionization vary considerably both within and across local school districts. Nevertheless the effect of this development has been to bring some teachers together as teachers in an organizational form independent of existing local educational structures.

In 1973 Murrow and Dupont offered their course on open education. This was the event which enabled the two trends of institutional innovation and teacher association to intersect. The teachers who took this course were by and large sensitive to issues of isolation and their adverse impact on professional development. Within a very short time teachers from several schools had met to discuss the possibility of a Center, prepare a proposal, organize support and obtain the requisite approval. Only a small minority of teachers and administrators participated in these initiatives, but this minority had sufficient connection within the institutional structure to obtain what they sought. From this conjunction of forces MTTC was born.

In its early stages of development MTTC attempted to maintain the alliance which had brought it into being. It kept close to the hierarchical structure of local district education by centering itself in the school which epitomized the innovativeness of that structure and whose principal became its most overt exponent. Programmatically, however, MTTC followed the lateral, associational patterns emerging out of teacher innovativeness. These patterns and this tradition of teacher innovation were most pronounced among elementary teachers. Consequently both traditions of innovation contributed to the early emphasis manifested by MTTC on early childhood and elementary education.

In terms of organizational development, however, the lateral associational pattern predominated over the hierarchical. In this respect MTTC can be truly described as a teacher center representing in its early development the goals and responses developed through teacher initiative. In terms of the definitions ascribed to teachers centers, it follows the school-based practitioner models described by Devaney and Thorn and by the British Schools Council.[9] MTTC also manifested in its early development the emergent, interstitial and invisible properties attributed by network analysis to innovative lateral structures.[10] Although MTTC did not lack formal organizational support, that support remained at a distance (if not overtly hostile), and early development took place through associational rather than hierarchical processes.

We also see in MTTC's early development the limits or blocks encountered by an associational structure operating within the parallel and coordinated hierarchical structures of local elementary and secondary education. Members of those structures who did not become involved with MTTC included the following: elementary teachers who did not feel isolated; subject-oriented high school teachers as a whole; teaching principals who preferred isolation and

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[9]These and other definitions are reviewed by Sharon Feiman in Teacher Centers, What Place in Education, Chapter 1.

[10]See especially Kadushin, On the Problem of Formalizing Emergent Networks.

and were critical of the Center's open educational emphasis; superintendents only loosely connected to MTTC's center of operations; local boards critical of the college-oriented drift and expensive commitments of 'better education' proponents. Behind the specific expressions of resistance there is a common thread, namely the hierarchical and conservative nature of local education itself, resisting innovation whether within its own forces or from extraneous non-local sources. What this suggests is that innovation is itself a lateral process, so that those innovators within the local hierarchical tradition who carried the day in the late 1960s and early 1970s were themselves suspect because of their departure from established norms. As it turned out, the conflict within the local hierarchical tradition between innovators and conservatives swung in favor of the latter, especially at the district board level, just around the time that MTTC was getting off the ground.

Faced with this resistance, it became necessary for the Center to reconstitute working relationships and policies between the hierarchical and associational forces which together had brought it into being. This was the task which fell to the second director. The strategies employed consisted of working much more overtly with administrators and boards and of working with teachers on a whole school but non-evaluative basis. In order to maintain lateral effectiveness, teacher-initiated in service programming was expanded, the Center's governing board was reorganized and strong connections were built up with nation-wide networks. Not surprisingly the latter initiatives proved easier to accomplish than the former. Nevertheless the hierarchical activities appear to have been sufficient to carry the Center through a period of local retrenchment to a point where innovativeness is once more emerging within the local hierarchical tradition. At the time of writing this innovativeness is expressing itself through a variety of activities centering on specific schools, principals and teaching staffs. The task of the Center will now be to continue to support such hierarchical and associational initiatives in ways which benefit both forces.

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